



**Join
the
Fight!**

JUSTFUNDIT

Amplification Toolkit

Justice can't wait. Neither can funding.

For more than 114 years, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) has fought to make the promise of equity and justice real for every person who stands in need of legal counsel in America, regardless of income, background, or zip code. But today, that promise is under threat.

JustFundIt is a national campaign to protect and expand federal investment in communities and families to ensure equal access to justice in America. As funding uncertainties and executive actions jeopardize the stability of families and communities, **NLADA is sounding the alarm and mobilizing action.**



Millions of Americans rely on legal aid to stay housed, employed, safe, and healthy.



Over 90% of criminal defendants need a public defender to protect their rights and freedom.



The overwhelming majority of clients served by civil legal aid and public defenders rely on federally funded programs, such as Medicaid, public benefits, housing, and educational resources.

NLADA members fight every day to protect communities and restore their access to benefits, education, Medicare, and due process. And yet, funding for communities and families remains drastically under-resourced. That's not justice. That's an injustice for the most vulnerable communities.

nlada.org/JustFundIt





Why It Matters

When legal aid programs and public defender offices can't operate, the fallout is immediate and devastating:

- **Evictions go unchallenged.**
- **Survivors of abuse can't get protection.**
- **Veterans lose access to benefits and mental health services.**
- **Children are pushed out of classrooms and into prison.**
- **People face incarceration or deportation without the defense they're entitled to.**
- **People accused of crimes can't challenge government overreach and misconduct.**

We are responsible for ensuring justice is available to all, not just those who can afford it.

This is not a partisan issue. It's a people issue. And it's time we fund justice like our communities depend on it – because they do.

Raise your voice. Share the stories. Demand action. JustFundIt.

Your support is vital to the success of the **JustFundIt** campaign. By working together, we can challenge the current narrative, advocate for equal justice, and ensure public defenders receive the funding they deserve. Together, we can make a difference.

What JustFundIt Demands



Protect and increase federal funding
for communities served by civil legal aid and public defense across all relevant agencies.



Uphold constitutional rights
by ensuring no one is denied legal representation due to budget cuts or political gamesmanship.



Defend the frontline advocates, attorneys, and legal professionals
who make access to justice possible in every community.



Tell Your Story: We want to hear YOUR story

We need YOUR help. Your stories are important and powerful, and we would be honored to hear and share your story. Our goal is to uplift real voices—like yours—to inspire others and preserve access to all legal services.

For Clients and Community Members: PLEASE SHARE YOUR STORY HERE.

We would especially like to hear stories about how having legal representation has helped you in areas such as: 1) Access to benefits (Medicaid, SNAP, Social Security, etc.); 2) Access to housing support; 3) Access to education support; or 4) other stories (disaster relief, family crisis, etc.).

1. Write it out

- [Click Here](#) to access our survey link

2. Submit a video

- Please introduce yourself in the video by first name and state.
- Record your video horizontally (landscape).
- Keep your video between 1-2 minutes.
- Choose a quiet background where your voice can be clearly heard.
- **PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR VIDEO HERE TO THIS FOLDER:**

i. Please name your video [First Name.State.Date of Submission]
Ex.) Anna.Minnesota.5.15.2025

3. Questions to consider when telling your story:

- Tell us briefly who you are (a mom, a student, which state you live in, etc.)
- Who helped you with your case, a public defender or a civil legal aid organization?
- How did your lawyer (and their office) help you? Why were they important to you?
- What might have happened if you hadn't had access to an attorney and how would that have affected your life?
- Is there anything else you want policymakers to know about the importance of preserving legal services and other supports for your community?



Tools to help you tell **your own story:**

Here are some resources from other organizations that you can adapt to help plan your storytelling about the importance of civil legal aid, public defense, access to public benefits such as Medicaid and SNAP, access to housing support, and Public Service Loan Forgiveness:

Storytelling Toolkit:

Find out what a good story is, what to do with your story, what your rights are as a storyteller, and more.

Storytelling Tips for Families and Supporters:

Get information on consent, protecting other people's privacy, and more.

Examples of Advocacy Stories:

Learn about different ways you can share your story.

How to Create Your Advocacy Story:

This resource will guide you through how to create and share your story.

My Testimony Blueprint:

Use this document to help you share your story with lawmakers.

Tell Your Story:

More steps to plan your storytelling.

Tools to help you tell **someone else's story:**

Do you know someone that has an amazing story? Do you have their permission to share and want to support them in telling their stories? Below are some resources to help you collect and craft good stories, ensuring you are protecting the storyteller and respecting ethical norms for story collection:

- **[Storytelling-For-Advocacy.pdf](#)**
- **[Trauma-Informed Storytelling Toolkit – Maria Bryan](#)**
- **[How to collect stories and use them as strategic communications tools](#)**



We Need Your Help. Contact Your Representative.

Use the following information to contact your senators and representatives asking them to protect federal funding. If you have personal experience with civil legal aid, please consider sharing your story with members of Congress. If you support civil legal aid but do not have personal experience, tell members of Congress why civil legal aid matters to people in your community.

IDENTIFY YOUR MEMBERS. [Click here](#) to find out who represents your district in the House, and [click here](#) to find out who your Senators are.

CALL YOUR MEMBERS. You can call their direct lines, listed on their webpages through the links above, or you can call the US Capitol Switchboard at **(202) 224-3121** where an operator will assist you. If you are unable to speak directly with anyone in your Member's office, leave a voicemail.

The call script below may help you plan what you would like to say to them:

I am a constituent from [Senator/Representative name]'s [state/district] from [name of your city/town] calling to urge them to protect federal funding for Legal Aid. Cuts to this program would cause millions of Americans nationwide to lose access to Civil Legal Aid which protected due process. Due process ensures that people have a fair chance to be heard in legal matters that affect their lives. I strongly urge the Senator/Member to protect this lifeline and oppose cuts or harmful policy changes that would threaten people's ability to access Civil Legal Aid. We need legal aid to protect access to public benefits such as housing, food, and health care that keep families stable and out of crisis. [Share your personal story, letting them know why Civil Legal Aid matters to you and your loved ones, and the millions of Americans whose futures hang in the balance.]



We Need Your Help. Contact Your Representative.

EMAIL YOUR MEMBERS. You can find their email addresses through the links in Step 1. **Be sure to include your full name and address.** Below is a sample email:

Dear [Representative Name]

I am a constituent from [Senator/Representative name]'s [state/district] from [name of your city/town] emailing to urge them to protect federal funding for Legal Aid. Cuts to this program would cause millions of Americans nationwide to lose access to Civil Legal Aid which protects due process. Due process ensures that people have a fair chance to be heard in legal matters that affect their lives. I strongly urge the [Senator/Member] to protect this lifeline and oppose cuts or harmful policy changes that would threaten people's ability to access Civil Legal Aid. Legal Aid protects access to public benefits such as housing, food, and health care that keep families stable and out of crisis.

Sincerely, your constituent, [Insert Your Name]

ATTEND A TOWN HALL. When Members are not in Washington, D.C., they often hold town halls in their districts. Check their websites for information about upcoming events. Also, most every member of Congress has a newsletter you can sign up for to stay up to date on their scheduled events and actions, including town halls.

If you attend a town hall, below is sample language you can use and adapt when speaking:

I am one of the millions of Americans that rely on legal aid to stay housed, employed, safe and healthy. [Insert 1-2 sentences of your personal story about how civil legal aid helped you] I believe in our constitutional right to due process. Will you commit to protecting civil legal aid, and programs and services like housing, Medicaid, SNAP and other public benefits by voting against any budget bill that includes funding cuts or other harmful changes to these programs and Civil Legal Aid?



Resources and Information:

Media Relations Guidance:

- [Letter to the Editor Guidance](#)
- [Opinion Piece Guidance](#)

Understanding the Federal Budget Process:

The federal government is divided into three major branches: The Executive Branch (White House and federal agencies), the Legislative Branch (Congress), and the Judicial Branch (federal courts). Congress has authority over federal funding, often referred to as the “Power of the Purse.” Federal funding is broken down into two major categories.

The first is Mandatory Funding. This includes so-called “entitlement” programs for which hundreds of thousands of people qualify, including Medicaid (health care), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or “food stamps”), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), among others. Changes to these programs may occur during the “Reconciliation” process, which is taking place right now. View an infographic about Reconciliation [here](#).

The second category is Discretionary Funding. This often is referred to as the annual appropriations process and provides funding for each federal fiscal year, which begins October 1. It includes appropriations for many government programs at an amount set by Congress every year, including funding for the federal agencies like the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Justice (DOJ), and others, as well as the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Legal Services Corporation. It also includes funding for many programs that goes to state and local governments and nonprofit organizations across the country. The annual appropriations process begins in every spring and has begun for FY 2026. View an infographic about the federal budget process [here](#) and a more detailed infographic on how that process actually plays out [here](#).

Want to learn more about protecting Education?

Public education transforms lives and creates a more just and inclusive society. Right now, access to education is being undermined by shifts in policy priorities and backtracking on efforts that were developed to ensure all students have safe and supportive spaces to learn. This is happening through cuts in both staffing and funding.

- [National Education Association | NEA.org](#)
- [Take Action | NEA Advocacy](#)



Resources and Information:

Want to learn more about protecting Medicaid and other public benefits?

Public benefits, including Medicaid and SNAP, ensure that communities, families, and individuals across the country are safe and stable for everyone. Right now, changes proposed through the Reconciliation process would result in millions of people across the country losing access to health care, food, and critical income.

- [Faces of Medicaid Legal Action Center](#)
- [Faces of Medicaid Amplification Toolkit](#)
- [Issues - Coalition on Human Needs](#)

Want to learn more about protecting Housing?

Safe and affordable housing is the bedrock of stability and allows people to live healthy lives, with access to education, employment and community. The U.S. has a shortage of 7.1 million rental homes affordable and available to renters with extremely low incomes, and shifts in federal policy, both through the executive branch and in Congress threaten to widen that gap.

- [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#)

Want to learn more about due process, civil legal aid and public defense?

The constitutional right to due process is enshrined in the Fifth Amendment. What it says: *No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.* What it means: the government may not take away life, liberty, or property from anyone *without reasonable notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard.* This means that when the government takes action to imprison someone, or denies them benefits for which they are eligible, or denies them custody of a child, it first must give notice *and* that person has the right to state their case (for example, appeal, in the case of public benefits).

Civil legal aid and public defense advocates exist to ensure that this constitutional right is observed and met. Every day, they ensure people in criminal proceedings are able to defend themselves against the strong arm of the government, and that people in civil proceedings can access housing, benefits, education, employment and so much more. But these legal advocates are vastly underfunded and current proposals seek to make this so much worse.

- [LSC - Legal Services Corporation: America's Partner for Equal Justice](#)

Want to learn more about some current legal issues in plain language?



General Tweets and Posts

[Insert your name/organization here] is joining the fight with [NLADA] to protect and expand federal funding for equal justice. Learn what we're fighting for and how you can get involved with #JustFundIt via their website: bit.ly/justfundit

#JustFundIt is our response to an increased threat to federal funding and equal justice. We're fighting with [NLADA] to protect America's essential civil legal aid and public defense systems. Learn how you can support us and amplify our message here: bit.ly/justfundit

We're joining the fight with [NLADA] and urging Congress to protect and expand federal funding so everybody can have access to justice. This campaign needs you now more than ever. Get involved by amplifying our message and making your voice heard: bit.ly/justfundit

Housing



Work, school, health, and safety are much more tenuous for people who are unhoused. Government investment in ending homelessness and ensuring housing is crucial to safe communities. Learn why we're working with @nlada and demanding Congress to #JustFundIt bit.ly/justfundit



Work, school, health, and safety are much more tenuous for people who are unhoused. Government investment in ending homelessness and ensuring housing is crucial to safe, thriving communities.

#JustFundIt is our response to an increased threat to federal funding and equal justice...

We're fighting with [NLADA] to protect America's essential civil legal aid and public defense systems. Learn how you can support us and amplify our message here: bit.ly/justfundit

#HousingJustice #HousingFirst
@HousingForAll #LegalAid
#PublicDefender #Justice
#JusticeForAll

Public Benefits and Housing Stability



Housing is critical to helping keep low-income families stable and out of the criminal and civil legal systems. We're calling on Congress to protect federal housing funding and provide funding for legal advocates who help people access them. #JustFundIt bit.ly/justfundit



Housing is critical to helping keep low-income families stable and out of the criminal and civil legal systems. We're calling on Congress to protect federal funding for housing and provide funding for legal advocates who help people access them.

#JustFundIt is our response to an increased threat to federal funding and equal justice...

We're fighting with [NLADA] to protect America's essential civil legal aid and public defense systems. Learn how you can support us and amplify our message here: bit.ly/justfundit

#HousingJustice #HousingFirst
@HousingForAll #LegalAid
#PublicDefender #Justice
#JusticeForAll



Medicaid & Public Benefits



Medicaid, food assistance, and cash assistance programs are central to the livelihoods of millions of Americans. Now more than ever, Congress must ensure that these public benefits and the legal advocates supporting them are properly funded. #JustFundIt bit.ly/justfundit @nlada



#medicaid, food assistance, and cash assistance programs are central to the livelihoods of millions of Americans. Now more than ever, Congress must ensure that these public benefits and the legal advocates supporting them are properly funded...

[Insert your name/organization here] is joining the fight with [NLADA] to protect and expand federal funding for equal justice. Learn what we're fighting for and how you can get involved with #JustFundIt via their website: bit.ly/justfundit

#Medicaid #HealthcareForAll
#Healthcare #MedicareForAll
#Justice #EqualJustice #JusticeForAll

Education



Countless experts say that education improves long-term opportunity. We're calling on Congress to protect access to public education and the legal advocates fighting to remove barriers to our students' success. #JustFundIt bit.ly/justfundit @nlada



Countless experts say that education improves long-term opportunity. We're calling on Congress to protect access to public #education and the legal advocates fighting to remove barriers to our students' success...

#JustFundIt is our response to an increased threat to federal funding and equal justice. We're fighting with [NLADA] to protect America's essential civil legal aid and public defense systems. Learn how you can support us and amplify our message here: bit.ly/justfundit

#EducationForAll #Education
#EducationIsPower #Justice
#EqualJustice #JusticeForAll

Due Process



#JustFundIt is our response to an increased threat to federal funding and equal justice. We're fighting with [NLADA] to protect America's essential civil legal aid and public defense systems. Learn how you can support us and amplify our message here: bit.ly/justfundit @nlada



Due process ensures that people have a fair chance to protect their rights in civil and criminal matters affecting their lives. We're calling on Congress to uphold constitutional rights and support the lawyers working to protect equal justice...

#JustFundIt is our response to an increased threat to federal funding and equal justice. We're fighting with [NLADA] to protect America's essential civil legal aid and public defense systems. Learn how you can support us and amplify our message here: bit.ly/justfundit

#DueProcess #LegalAid
#PublicDefenders #Lawyers
#Legal #JusticeForAll #EqualJustice



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Invest in our shared future

Make a tax-deductible contribution to support our
ability to successfully actualize JustFundIt.