



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF TRIAL LAWYERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACTL Urges Continued Support for Legal Services Corporation

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA (June 30, 2025) – The American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL), acting through its Executive Committee, expresses its strong support for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) and urges Congress to continue its long-standing bipartisan funding of the LSC's vital mission.

As the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas recently said: "Justice for only people who can afford it is not justice for all nor justice at all." *Written Testimony of Hon. Nathan L. Hecht Chief Justice, The Supreme Court of Texas, Before the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, Closing the Justice Gap: How to Make the Civil Justice System Accessible to All Americans* (July 9, 2024).

The American College of Trial Lawyers recognizes that the American legal system operates on the fundamental premise that justice is best served when litigants can present their facts and legal arguments for adjudication by a neutral party. Yet current estimates are that three out of five civil litigants in the United States are self-represented. *See The Self-Represented Litigation Network* (<https://www.srln.org/>). The problem is particularly acute in family law and housing cases. These self-represented individuals struggle to present themselves effectively, making it difficult for our judicial system to deliver justice. Studies show that the self-represented litigants are much less likely to prevail in civil cases that have a huge impact on their lives than litigants in similar cases who have the benefit of counsel.

The LSC is critical to addressing the nationwide problem of providing justice to self-represented litigants. The numbers speak for themselves. According to LSC published statistics, 52 million Americans (about 16% of the population) qualify for LSC services. *See LSC 101 Fact Sheet, Legal Services Corporation* (<https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/lsc-fact-sheets>). Approximately 5.2 million Americans are assisted by LSC grantees annually. *Id.* Those cases often involve domestic violence, child safety, housing security, food security, elder abuse, and veterans' rights. Many people who benefit from LSC services reside in rural areas where access to lawyers and courts is particularly limited.

The strain on, and cost to, our courts of managing millions of self-represented litigants is enormous. Judges throughout the country report that the consequences of attempting to provide justice to thousands of self-represented people can be disastrous. The sheer



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numbers of cases involving self-represented people impair the effectiveness and efficiency of courts as judges strive to serve all who need dispute resolution. More staff time is required to serve self-represented parties. Court procedures are slowed; case dockets become backlogged; justice is delayed. Without a doubt, trial courts throughout the country are hobbled by the huge volume of cases involving self-represented persons.

Despite a growing demand for legal help, LSC's funding has fallen by 50% in real dollars since 1981 while the number of eligible individuals needing legal assistance has surged. Fifty-four million Americans qualify for LSC-funded legal assistance. Because of limited resources, LSC grantees must turn away more than half of eligible individuals who seek legal assistance. A recent national study found that 92% of low-income Americans lack legal assistance for their civil legal problems. *Justice Gap Research | LSC - Legal Services Corporation: America's Partner for Equal Justice*. (<https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/executive-summary/>).

The American College of Trial Lawyers has long supported access to justice, championing federal support for legal services even prior to creation of the LSC. This support is integral to the mission of the College, and is reflected in our mission statement, our media releases, and our organizational structure. The College devotes significant resources each year to issues of underrepresentation through its Access to Justice Committee, and its Distinguished Pro Bono Fellows program whereby Fellows of the College partner with public-interest organizations, including LSC entities such as Legal Aid of Southeast and Central Ohio and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services.

Notwithstanding the best efforts and support of organizations like the College, our country cannot "pro bono" its way out of the problem of millions of self-represented litigants. The problem is simply too massive. It is a problem that bipartisan Congresses for decades have consistently recognized as needing the attention and funding of the federal government, which is why LSC was created and has been continuously funded. The case for full funding of the LSC remains as strong as ever.

That is why the American College of Trial Lawyers strongly supports full funding of the LSC.

We are joined in our call for full support of LSC by 40 bipartisan state [Attorneys General](#), 102 corporate [General Counsels](#) of the largest businesses in America, 37 bipartisan state [Chief Justices](#), 160 [law firms](#) in all 50 states, and 48 law school [Deans](#) from across the country.

About The American College of Trial Lawyers

The American College of Trial Lawyers comprises the best of the trial bar from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico and is widely considered to be the premier professional trial



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organization in North America. Founded in 1950, the College is an invitation only fellowship. The College thoroughly investigates each nominee for admission and selects only those who have demonstrated the very highest standards of trial advocacy, ethical conduct, integrity, professionalism and collegiality. The College maintains and seeks to improve the standards of trial practice, professionalism, ethics, and the administration of justice through education and public statements on important legal issues relating to its mission. The College strongly supports the independence of the judiciary, trial by jury, respect for the rule of law, access to justice, and fair and just representation of all parties to legal proceedings.

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