

AT A TIME WHEN NEEDED MOST, LEGAL AID FUNDING TO DECREASE IN ARIZONA

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Reduction Expected To Impact Over 3,000 Families

[Phoenix, AZ] It is anticipated that 3,000 fewer Arizonans will receive legal assistance as a result of congressional funding cuts. According to a report released this week by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education, those Arizonans will not receive help in preventing foreclosure, defending against predatory lenders, or in cases where victims of domestic violence need help to get an order of protection. This is happening at the same time when the demand for legal services has never been higher.

In mid-November, Congress agreed to a 14.8% reduction to Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding that will result in a \$1.6 million loss to Arizona's three legal aid organizations. Arizona's legal aid organizations, Community Legal Services, DNA People's Legal Services and Southern Arizona Legal Aid, have been on the front lines of the State's economic battles since the recession's beginning, helping thousands of low income Arizonans with their civil legal needs.

The report is the culmination of a six month long public survey hosted by the Foundation to better understand the legal needs of Arizona's population. The Foundation's Executive Director, Dr. Kevin Ruegg, explains, "Our intent for the report, before the news of the federal funding reduction, was to help the general public understand the meaning of legal services. Since the news of the cuts, the report has taken on a whole new meaning – It isn't just the meaning of legal services that was defined. The report clearly explains the impact in this loss of funding." **Read Report: [2011 Legal Services Preliminary Report](#)**

The reductions in LSC funding will not bode well for Arizonans in similar legal predicaments as those participating in the survey. According to the report, a majority of the renters seeking legal assistance needed help resolving a health or safety issue such as not having working heating/cooling appliances or problems with cockroaches. For homeowners, many of the respondents needed help navigating a foreclosure or short sale with the highest percentage being over 55 years old.

Arizona's legal aid programs are struggling to find solutions to the funding crisis. Over the past year, programs have already had to respond to smaller cuts and losses in funding. "We're already operating with a skeleton crew on a shoestring budget. This kind of reduction will have a significant impact on the services available to Arizona's communities" explains Lillian Johnson, Executive Director of Community Legal Services. "What legal aid programs need right now is financial support and volunteers. These people turn to us to help – we have to make sure the scales of justice are balanced for each person. Really, is there justice for any of us if it's not there for all of us?"

About the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education

The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education provides technical and financial assistance to legal aid organizations, schools and community groups. The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education promotes “Access to Justice for All Arizonans” by supporting law-related education and free legal services and by promoting statewide collaborative efforts.

Helpful Websites

- Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education www.azflse.org and www.AZLawHelp.org
- Community Legal Services www.clsaz.org, Lillian Johnson, Executive Director, (602)258-3434
- DNA People’s Legal Services, www.dnalegalservices.org, Levon Henry, Executive Director, (928) 774-0653
- Southern Arizona Legal Aid www.sazlegalaid.org Anthony Young, Executive Director, (520) 623-9465
- Legal Services Corporation www.lsc.gov

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