

## TAKE ACTION: Lend Your Voice to Equal Justice

Over 350 people have added their names to the statement below. Please add your name if you, too, believe in the ideas expressed in this "I believe" statement. This statement will be used to demonstrate the broad-based support for civil equal justice.

[Click Here to Sign Now](#)

I believe in the rule of law.  
I believe, under law, we all have important rights and protections,  
not just from crime,  
but for day-to-day matters—  
to protect the agreements central to our lives like marriage, employment, custody,  
and our home mortgages and rent.

I believe there's a reason we pledge allegiance to a nation that promises justice for all,  
but I believe this promise is threatened.

I believe too many families live with injustice—  
sometimes homelessness, bankruptcy or abuse—  
because they can't afford help for serious civil legal problems.  
I believe this hurts our whole community.

I believe our laws should protect all of us,  
not just those who can afford a lawyer.  
I believe, under law, we have rights and also a pressing responsibility to make real the promise of *justice for all*.

*-Equal Justice Open House Day  
October 11, 2006*

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### Job Opportunity

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#### Equal Justice Coalition, Director

Applications will be accepted from now through April 20, 2007, for the Equal Justice Coalition staff position. Please [CLICK HERE](#) for more information about the position and how to apply.



# Justice at Work

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## House Releases Budget with Increase for Civil Legal Aid and Justice Programs

by Sara Zier,

Equal Justice Coalition

### Budget Update

The Equal Justice Coalition has been busy advocating about the critical need to increase civil legal aid funding. We appreciate the help of our supporters who have made trips to Olympia and calls to their legislators as part of this effort. Last Tuesday, the House released its proposed budget including the full increase for civil legal aid that was requested and supported by the Office of Civil Legal Aid and the Equal Justice Coalition. The proposed increase, if passed, will provide essential legal aid services to thousands more low-income families who have nowhere to turn. Specifically, new funds for civil legal aid will:

- help more families and individuals in rural regions of the state where legal aid presence is most insufficient; and
- expand the efficiency created by a centralized legal aid hotline statewide.

The House budget proposal also includes increases for other justice system needs

identified in the *Justice in Jeopardy Initiative* but at amounts lower than requested. Below are the numbers in the proposed House budget. To read more about these requests, please see the EJC's memo on the 2007-2009 Justice in Jeopardy Initiative. The Senate Budget will be released on March 27, and Justice in

for your information, about some bills that might impact low-income families with civil legal problems:

- SB 5470 – a family law bill, “revising provisions concerning dissolution proceedings.” This bill introduces several strategies to improve access to justice in

Need	Biennial Budget Increase Request	House Budget Proposal
Civil Legal Aid	\$5.3 million	\$5.3 million
Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)	\$13.6 million	\$6 million
Court Interpreters	\$7.8 million	\$1 million
Criminal Indigent Defense	\$19 million	\$7.5 million
Parents Representation in Dependencies	\$15 million	\$5.2 million

Jeopardy stakeholders will continue to advocate for sufficient funding.

### Bill Highlights

The 2007 Washington Legislative session has been a busy one: more bills have been filed for consideration than in any other year in the history of the Legislature. While the EJC's focus this session is exclusively on sufficient funding for civil legal aid, there are many proposed bills that impact the justice system, many of which are advocated for by EJC partners and stakeholders. Below are very brief highlights,

family law matters, including mediation services, fee issues, introduction of a family court liaison program, and clarifications to the dissolution statute. Appropriations are also being considered with this bill, including for civil legal aid services for domestic violence victims.

- E2SHB 1461 - provides a dispute resolution process for complaints concerning mobile home/manufactured housing communities. This bill creates a complaint, investigation, mediation, and enforcement process within the Attorney

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General. The system is largely paid for by a fee imposed on the lots, split equally between the park owner and the home owner. The bill moves the existing investigation done by the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development, which does not have enforcement power, to the Attorney General.

- SSB 5320 - would establish a state office of public guardianship as an independent office in the judicial branch. The office would contract with public or private agencies to provide publicly funded guardianship services.

- EHB 1956 - would be another step in affording fair housing protections to all tenants. This bill would prohibit landlords from using "source of income" discrimination as a way of denying housing to tenants. Additionally the bill would prohibit landlords from refusing to rent to Section 8 recipients, solely on the basis of the tenant's use of a Section 8, or other housing, subsidy.

- SSB 5244- Parents who apply for public assistance are required to assign their right to child support, both current support and any unpaid arrears, to the state for reimbursement of the cost of their welfare checks. Currently, the federal government takes half the

child support paid and the state keeps half. Under this bill, the state will take a federal option to change this system in 2 ways: 1) families will no longer be required to assign their arrears—so any support collected for past periods of time will go to the families and not the state; and 2) up to \$100 for one child and \$200 for 2 or more children of the child support collected each month will be "passed through" to the families. This means that extra money in the homes of low-income children and families. □

## **Hon. Slade Gorton and Hon. Gary Locke to Co-Chair 2007-08 Campaign for Equal Justice**

*By Karen Falkingham,  
Campaign for Equal Justice*

Former U.S. Senator Slade Gorton, and former Governor Gary Locke will serve as Co-Chairs for the 2007-08 Campaign for Equal Justice.



*Slade Gorton, Counsel  
K&L Gates.*



*Gary Locke, Partner  
Davis Wright Tremaine.*

The Campaign for Equal Justice, beginning its third year of operation, is a collaborative effort of legal aid programs, local bar associations, attorneys and citizens-at-large working together to raise charitable support from individuals, law firms, corporations, foundations and other organizations. These funds support the operations of Washington's 30 civil legal aid programs, known as the Alliance for Equal Justice, that provide free legal assistance to low-income families and individuals who otherwise could not afford help.

Gorton, currently of Counsel at K&L Gates, and Locke, now a partner at Davis Wright Tremaine, both are pillars of the legal community and have been eloquent and effective advocates for equal access to justice throughout exemplary careers in public service.

"There's no doubt that Slade Gorton and Gary Locke will

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continue to raise awareness and increasing levels of support for our state's much needed civil legal aid programs," said William H. Gates, Sr., Campaign for Equal Justice 2005-06 Co-Chair. "Both men are committed public servants with a demonstrated commitment to equal access to justice and view access to justice as a fundamental tenet of democracy." Mr. Gates helped lead the Campaign's inaugural efforts, which in two short years raised over \$2 million to help Washingtonians protect themselves and their families from potentially ruinous situations such as predatory lending schemes, denial of healthcare, domestic violence and unsafe working and living conditions.

Paula E. Boggs, executive vice president, general counsel and secretary of Starbucks is the 2006-08 president of the Legal Aid for Washington Fund (LAW Fund) board of directors, which administers the Campaign for Equal Justice. Boggs agreed with Gates, and noted, "Our laws guarantee basic rights and protections for all of us—not just those who can afford a lawyer. That's a non-partisan principle we all are invested in safeguarding."

Funding for legal aid is a public-private partnership.

However, every day, low-income and vulnerable people with urgent civil legal problems are turned away because programs only have resources to help a fraction of those in need. In the year ahead, the 2007-08 Campaign for Equal Justice Co-Chairs and volunteers seek to increase charitable giving to civil legal aid considerably within the legal profession and from the public at large by raising the Campaign's visibility and expanding its statewide network of volunteers who are asking their friends and colleagues to donate to the Campaign. □ [www.c4ej.org](http://www.c4ej.org)

## **Increase in Federal Funding for Civil Legal Aid after Years of Cutbacks**

*By Sara Zier,  
Equal Justice Coalition*

On February 15, 2007, President Bush signed a continuing resolution extending appropriations for the remainder of FY 2007, including \$348.5 million for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). This is a \$22 million increase in funding for civil legal aid, to be divided nationwide, and it's the first funding increase for LSC since 2002, when LSC, like other domestic programs, began suffering across-the-board

funding cuts. In Washington State, this federal increase means an additional \$300,000 for the Northwest Justice Project to continue helping low-income families who face urgent civil legal problems.

Just before signing this resolution, President Bush submitted his FY 2008 budget to Congress. The President proposes to cut LSC funds to \$311 million. The Legal Services Corporation Board, however, is requesting an increase to \$430.7 million for FY 2008 to meet the needs identified in their recent study—*Documenting the Justice Gap in America: The Current Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*. Most significantly, the study found that for each person who received legal assistance from an LSC-funded program, at least one eligible client was turned away due to lack of resources.

LSC Board Chairman Frank B. Strickland said "LSC recognizes the fiscal constraints facing Congress. However, we hope Congress will conclude that turning away over 50 percent of eligible individuals who need legal assistance is an unacceptable situation."

The Equal Justice Coalition will travel to DC to meet with

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Washington's Congressional Delegation about this appropriation. □

## **Spotlight On An Alliance Member: The Many Lives of a Pro Bono Program Coordinator**

*By Andrea Axel,  
Legal Foundation of Washington*

Being a pro bono coordinator in a predominantly rural community involves wearing many different hats. To be expected, there are often days spent setting appointments for clients and overseeing clinics at the program offices. John Brett at Chelan Douglas County Volunteer Attorney Services has many of those. He speaks with clients in English and Spanish to help assess their legal needs and makes appointments for advice clinics or with a volunteer attorney for direct representation. Hundreds of low income people in the area find help for their urgent legal problems from the program.

Other days John is a community liaison. He attends meetings with other social service providers to educate them about legal aid and to make contact with hard to reach clients. Through these efforts his program holds legal advice clinics at low income housing locations, reaching seniors and disabled clients

who might otherwise be unable to access legal help. John also worked with local homeless programs to set up a series of legal clinics at a park where food is distributed to homeless people.

Some days John is a policy advisor, working with others in his region and around the state to plan how best to work together to provide access to justice for those in need. John wears a media representative hat as well, appearing on local television and talking to newspapers to promote the legal services available at the program.

Behind the scenes, John is the program's administrator, keeping track of clients served and generating reports for funders and the board of directors. John is also resourceful about generating resources for the program. He recently convinced a local Starbucks to make a monthly donation to recognize volunteer attorneys.

John is quick to point out that he is not alone doing this work. "I am lucky to have a great board of directors who care deeply about how best to serve the low income people in our area." He also notes "there are many other pro bono coordinators in the state doing this same type of thing."

And he is right – Washington has dozens of local pro bono programs helping thousands of low income people get help for legal problems affecting their basic human needs. □

## **21st Annual Goldmark Luncheon**

*By Dee Thierry,  
Legal Foundation of Washington*

Thank you for attending the 21st Annual Goldmark Award Luncheon.

Congratulations to the 2007 Charles A. Goldmark Distinguished Service Award recipient Pat McIntyre and special thanks to guest speaker William H. Neukom.



*L-R: Caitlin Davis Carlson, Judge Michael J. Fox, Patrick H. McIntyre, César Torres, William H. Neukom.*

## **Thank You, Sponsors**

The Legal Foundation of Washington gratefully acknowledges our Goldmark Equal Justice Sponsors & Supporters whose help made possible the Goldmark Award Luncheon without the use of precious IOLTA dollars.

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Your partnership with the Foundation, the Campaign for Equal Justice and the Alliance for Equal Justice is of enormous value to families and individuals with nowhere else to turn.

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*Legal Foundation of Washington  
Ph:206-624-2536•Fax:206-382-3396* □

**Check out the Legal Foundation's Newly- Revised Website:**  
[www.legalfoundation.org](http://www.legalfoundation.org)

## **Law Students Attend Goldmark**

*By Sara Zier,  
Equal Justice Coalition*



*L-R: Colleen Melody, Michael Peters,  
John McKay, Fred Tausend.*

Melody and Peters (pictured above) are 2006 Gates Scholars in their first year at the University of Washington School of Law. Students from each of Washington state's three law schools attended the Goldmark Luncheon on February 16, 2007. That morning students from Gonzaga also had an opportunity to visit the Northwest Justice Project's CLEAR hotline and learn more about public interest law from attorneys who assist

low-income families every day. This opportunity was organized by the Access to Justice (ATJ) Board's Law School Relations Committee, which was formalized this January and had been working on an ad hoc basis for over a year to increase law school involvement in our state's network of civil legal aid programs, the Alliance for Equal Justice. The goal of the ATJ Law School Relations Committee is to ensure that every law student in the state has an understanding of the importance of public interest law and to actively integrate students with public service law providers across the state. □

## **Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) Works to Preserve and Expand Legal Advocacy for Victims**

*By Sara Zier,  
Equal Justice Coalition*

Domestic violence programs struggle to meet the needs of survivors who face enormous challenges in the civil justice system but cannot afford an attorney and are among the many low-income families who are turned away from legal aid because of insufficient resources to help all of those in need. Domestic violence legal advocacy is a shelter-

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based program where non-attorney advocates help domestic violence victims file protection orders and understand the legal system, paperwork and processes. Legal advocates are able to provide some assistance to families who would otherwise face the court system alone.

After serious federal cuts to legal advocacy, Governor Gregoire's proposed 2007-2009 budget also cut legal advocacy funds. The WSCADV is advocating for an appropriation that would fund a legal advocate in every domestic violence shelter around the state—a biennial budget of \$4.5 million. To learn more, visit the WSCADV legislative action page: <http://www.wscadv.org/Legislative/index.htm>. □

## REGIONAL PLANNING UPDATE

*By Lynn Greiner,  
State Plan Oversight Committee*

Progress continues to be made in implementation of the revised State Plan. Two components of the Plan—upgrading rural delivery of civil legal aid and strengthening the pro bono

function—are the subject of regional planning efforts in 19 designated regions across the state. Regional planning team leaders have been meeting to address these two priorities, first in terms of assessing the existing delivery system, low income community, and gaps in service. We are now in the final phase of regional planning; by June 30<sup>th</sup>, each region is expected to submit a regional plan outlining a more effective and efficient client services delivery structure.

To assist regional planners in the development of their regional plan, a template tool was developed to guide the process. Because each region is different in terms of its low income communities, poverty population, the composition of existing legal aid providers, and available attorneys to assist with pro bono representation, different factors and issues must be considered during development of the regional plan. The template accounts for these variables, and is designed to assist planners in working through the issues in each of the unique regions.

Regional planners have had the planning template for over a month and, by now, have formulated an approach to sorting through the issues that must be addressed in their

regional plan. An important component of this phase is involvement of appropriate community partners, including judges, court clerks and facilitators, bar leaders and local attorneys, and community members who work with low income populations. Members of the State Plan Oversight Committee, along with regional planning facilitator Lynn Greiner, are working closely with planners in all 19 regions during this final phase. We are all committed to making this regional planning process worthwhile and mindful of the end goal—creation of a legal aid delivery system that best meets the legal needs of the low income communities throughout our state. For more information, contact Lynn Greiner at [lgreiner@seanet.com](mailto:lgreiner@seanet.com) or 206-660-6239. □