



Civil Justice Reform Talking Points

Our nation's promise: justice for all

Civil legal aid has long enjoyed broad bipartisan support for a reason: Americans believe equal justice under the law is a right, not a privilege.¹

When your family, health, or home is on the line, you deserve legal help so you have a fair shot in court.

Through legal representation and help, including self-help services and easy-to-understand forms and information that guide people through complicated legal proceedings, civil legal aid assures fairness for all in the justice system, not just for those who can afford it.

Who needs civil legal aid

Millions of Americans cannot afford the legal help they need when they face life changing challenges in court.

Civil legal aid helps ordinary Americans all across the country, including: a veteran denied rightfully earned benefits, a family fighting wrongful evictions or foreclosures, people trying to rebuild their lives in the wake of natural disasters, and a woman trapped in an abusive relationship.

- For a family facing eviction, civil legal aid can be the difference between keeping their home or being forced out onto the street.²
- For a survivor of domestic violence, civil legal aid can enable her to achieve safety and independence.³

An investment that benefits all Americans

Civil legal aid is a good investment that benefits all Americans. Civil legal aid helps Americans of all backgrounds and ages, saving taxpayers money while ensuring justice for all.

¹ Recent research commissioned by Voices for Civil Justice and funded by the Public Welfare Foundation recently found that 82 percent of likely voters believe that equal justice under the law is a right, not a privilege.

² One recent report showed that three of five tenants had valid legal reasons to fight eviction, but most lost their homes because they couldn't afford legal help and didn't understand their legal rights.

³ One study showed legal help can reduce domestic violence by about 20 percent. Another showed that legal help can be even more effective than shelters or counseling in stopping domestic violence.

Voices for Civil Justice

Like preventative health care, legal aid addresses problems early to keep them from escalating.

- Helping people stay in their homes stabilizes families and enables them to remain self-sufficient, ultimately saving taxpayers money. The public costs of sheltering people who become homeless are significant, as are the increased costs of providing public assistance, transitional housing, and health care for families in crisis.
- Helping survivors of domestic violence with early legal interventions prevents more serious problems down the road. This also reduces shelter costs.

Civil legal aid leverages resources to build a better justice system for everyone.

- By simplifying court processes, allowing trained personnel to provide some forms of legal help, offering online tools and other self-help services, and providing screening to guide people to the type of help they need, civil legal aid advocates help streamline the court system and ensure equal justice under the law for Americans of all income levels.
- Private attorneys who volunteer thousands of hours of pro bono work in their communities depend on civil legal aid organizations to provide them with training and connect them with clients who need their help.⁴

Making justice for all a reality

Civil legal aid advocates across the country are working to create a civil justice system that allows everyone to get the information and help they need when they need it and in a form they can use. But they need help.

Current funding meets only a fraction of the need for civil legal aid. To ensure fairness in the justice system, it is critical that we expand access to these services for all Americans who need them.⁵

(Revised July 2018)

⁴ Letter from 150 Major Law Firms in support of the Legal Services Corporation

<http://www.nationallawjournal.com/image/nlj/LegalServicesLetter.pdf>

Letter from the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators in support of the Legal Services Corporation

<https://lsc-live.app.box.com/s/fsv8qtmyis1zasrnj9zkt3ohhusosmu2>

⁵ A recent report showed that 86% of the civil legal problems reported by low-income Americans received inadequate or no legal help <https://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/images/TheJusticeGap-FullReport.pdf>