

# Everyone Benefits From Legal Aid



## **Investing in Justice, Strengthening Communities - How Everyone in Missouri Benefits from Funding for Legal Aid**

*"Without Missouri's legal aid programs, thousands of low-income Missourians each year would not have access to the courts. The programs handle Protective Order cases and Medicaid and SSI appeals in which the clients desperately need representation, when no other lawyers will take those cases. The legal aid attorneys not only give their clients access to the justice system, they make the system work more effectively." The Honorable William Ray Price, Jr., Retired, Chief Justice, The Supreme Court of Missouri (pictured to the right)*

### **Who We Are - A Network of Four Private, Non-Profit Organizations That...**

- Employs 150 lawyers who handle 20,700 cases each year.
- Provides 48,000 clients and their household members with essential legal services such as protection from domestic violence and prevention of eviction from home.
- Has 16 offices statewide that provide services in every county in the state.
- Coordinates the efforts of over 1,000 volunteer lawyers in private practice who donate over 1,500 volunteer cases per year.

- Leverages our government funding with \$22.4 million annually of private contributions and grants.
- Produces \$1.84 of direct financial benefit to communities across Missouri for every dollar of funding we receive.

### ***What We Do - Provide Free Civil (Not Criminal) Legal Assistance to Low-Income People...***

- Provided 2,100 Order of Protections for victims of domestic violence. Research has proven that legal assistance is the most effective way to stop the violence.
- Enables 2,100 children and families to avoid homelessness through our representation in eviction and foreclosure cases.
- Helped 1,6000 people access to health care who would otherwise not have health care or insurance. This improved their quality of life and reduced the cost of emergency-room medical treatment.
- Due to limited resources, we prioritize problems that seriously affect people's ability to provide for themselves and their families -- for example: domestic violence, home eviction or foreclosure, loss of basic income, or access to medical care.

### ***Who We Serve - Missouri's Most Vulnerable People Including...***

- Victims of domestic violence.
- Individuals who are permanently and totally disabled and cannot work.
- Senior citizens.
- Veterans.
- Families with children.

### ***Who We Are Not - Public Defenders or Private Attorneys***

- We do not represent defendants in criminal cases in state or federal court.
- We do not bring cases for money damages that private attorneys can handle for a fee.

## **The Widespread Benefits of Legal Aid - Helping Those in Need, Promoting Efficiency and Strengthening Missouri's Local Economies**

## ***Preserving and Expanding Legal Aid Will Reap Benefits For Everyone in Missouri***

- By investing in legal aid, Missouri's leaders can make "Equal Justice under Law" a reality. In the process, state leaders will multiply the investment many times in the form of a healthier economy and better lives for all Missourians.

## ***Helping Those in Need Helps Everyone***

- By eliminating domestic violence, for example, legal aid reduces crime, produces healthier, happier children who are less likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence and allows survivors to go back to living healthy, productive lives. We also reduce the costs of emergency-room medical treatment and police protection for victims and costs of prosecution and incarceration of abusers.
- By preventing illegal evictions and foreclosures, legal aid keeps families in their homes and avoids the burden on taxpayers of providing emergency shelter and other services to people who otherwise would have joined the growing number of homeless people in our state.

## ***The Missouri Legal Aid Network is a Wise Investment***

- Every \$1 million in new funding enables our programs to provide 1,900 more people with measurable positive outcomes that include families protected from domestic violence; veterans and disabled people provided with access to health care and income support; and families threatened with eviction enabled to stay in their homes.
- In 2018, legal aid programs brought \$9.0 million in federal dollars into the state, producing a \$16.5 million "economic stimulus" effect that created additional revenue for businesses and more jobs for working Missourians.

## ***Working to Fill The Justice Gap***

- Legal Aid is effective, yet our resources are so limited that we have to turn away tens of thousands of applicants each year who have nowhere else to turn.
- Studies show that only one in five people living in poverty who need legal help are able to get it from any source.
- The promise of justice is little more than an empty pledge when our most vulnerable citizens do not have access to the legal help they need to protect

them from fraud and deception and allow them access to basic needs including shelter, medical care and family safety.

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