

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD
HOUSE SPEECHES AND INSERTS
July 25, 2014

COMMEMORATING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2014

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago today President Nixon signed the law creating the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) as a private, nonprofit corporation to support civil legal aid organizations all across the country. Since that time LSC has become a critical and integral vehicle through which federal funds are distributed to 134 local legal aid programs, with nearly 800 offices serving every congressional district.

LSC is tasked by Congress to ensure equal access to justice for those Americans who otherwise would be unable to afford to enforce their rights through our legal system. It serves people with the most critical legal needs—food, shelter, medical care, income maintenance, and physical safety. It makes a real difference for low-income and elderly Oregonians and Americans.

I was proud to work at legal aid early in my career and I'll never forget the people I was able to help. They desperately needed an attorney when they could little afford one. I want to emphasize that they were not low income by choice—most had unexpected medical bills, had lost a job, or lost a spouse.

Unfortunately, Congress is not living up to its obligation. LSC-funded attorneys still turn away more than 50 percent of eligible clients because of a lack of resources. It is unacceptable to leave people out on their own to navigate a complicated and already strained legal system, or else suffer continued injustice. We must do better.

I congratulate LSC on its 40th anniversary, and commend all the hard working legal aid attorneys and staff who get so little recognition for such important work.