

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD
HOUSE SPEECHES AND INSERTS
July 24, 2014

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

HON. TOM COLE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2014

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, Friday, July 25, marks the 40th anniversary of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). In 1974, Congress—with bipartisan support, including that of President Nixon—established LSC to be a major source of funding for civil legal aid in this country. LSC is a private, nonprofit corporation, funded by Congress, with the mission to ensure equal access to justice under law for all Americans by providing civil legal assistance to those who otherwise would be unable to afford it. LSC distributes nearly 94 percent of its annual Federal appropriations to 134 local legal aid programs, with nearly 800 offices serving every congressional district and U.S. territories.

LSC-funded legal aid programs make a crucial difference to millions of Americans by assisting with the most basic civil legal needs, such as addressing matters involving safety, subsistence, and family stability. These low-income Americans are women seeking protection from abuse, mothers trying to obtain child support, families facing unlawful evictions or foreclosures that could leave them homeless, veterans seeking benefits duly earned, seniors defending against consumer scams, and individuals who have lost their jobs and need help in applying for unemployment compensation and other benefits.

It is LSC-funded attorneys who help parents obtain and keep custody of their children, assist parents in enforcing child support payments and help women who are victims of domestic violence. In fact, three out of four legal aid clients are women, and legal aid programs identify domestic violence as one of their top priorities.

Given the vital role played by LSC-funded attorneys, we need to do better than turn away more than 50 percent of eligible clients who seek assistance because of lack of LSC program resources. With the growing number of Americans eligible for services and increased demand for legal services, the need for legal aid attorneys has never been greater. On this anniversary, I salute the Legal Services Corporation and LSC-funded attorneys for the vital work they do every day on behalf of Americans who need qualified counsel. Every day that a legal aid attorney protects the safety, security and health of our most vulnerable citizens, they bring this nation closer to living up to its commitment to equal justice for all.