

A TRIBUTE TO THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 23, 2014

Mr. SCHIFF. 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. territory.

LSC-funded legal aid programs make a crucial difference to millions of Americans by assisting with the most basic civil legal needs. These low-income Americans are women seeking protection from domestic violence, mothers trying to obtain child support or navigate custody hearings, 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.

In my district, LSC provides funding to Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, an organization which provided legal aid to over 4,600 clients last year and looks to increase that number this year. But despite that enormous contribution to our society and an increasing demand for their services, Neighborhood Services of Los Angeles County, and many of its sister institutions across the country, have seen their LSC funding diminish in recent years.

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, as well as the thousands of attorneys who contribute pro bono services to clients in need. 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.