

March 28, 2017

To: All Members of Congress

The undersigned 185 leaders of corporate legal departments across the country write to urge you to support the preservation of the **Legal Services Corporation (LSC)** and provide funding at a level of \$450 million for FY 2018, which would be consistent with the appropriation received in FY2010, adjusted for inflation. As the cornerstone of equal justice in America, LSC creates a level playing field for the many lower and moderate- income families who cannot afford a lawyer. By upholding the fundamental American promise of liberty and justice for all, the minimal investment in LSC generates a significant positive return for business and for the health of individuals and communities across the nation.

As lawyers and business leaders, we understand how LSC's national framework provides the basic structure that supports the provision of civil legal services. It also supports the countless hours of pro bono representation provided by corporate legal departments and in-house attorneys. Without the structure and dedicated resources of LSC, many of these volunteer hours would not be possible. Pro bono assistance is an essential part of the representation that is available to people who would otherwise go unrepresented and is increasingly recognized as good for business.

Civil legal issues can have devastating, life altering consequences for people who are forced to face the justice system alone. Legal aid programs provide access to vital resources that anyone can use to navigate the civil justice system. LSC grantees serve almost two million Americans facing critical legal needs every year. These programs serve, among others:

- active duty military personnel, as well as veterans returning from wars;
- domestic violence victims;
- elderly individuals;
- families who are in danger of losing their homes;
- victims of natural disasters;
- families involved in child custody disputes; and
- small business owners.

Federal support for legal aid forms the foundation of our nation's civil justice infrastructure. LSC funds grantees covering every county in America, and its grantees are often the only legal aid program for many in our country's most rural areas. Without this targeted approach, effective access to our civil justice system would likely be mainly available only in urban and suburban parts of the United States.

While we understand that within this fiscal environment difficult decisions about spending must be made, we believe that access to justice is not an expendable luxury but an indispensable manifestation of our country's most fundamental values. Just as investing in

America's roads and bridges are vital to our transportation infrastructure, LSC is a vital part of the infrastructure that undergirds our justice system, ensuring that fair treatment is not dependent on a person's ability to pay for it.

Sincerely,

John F. Schultz
Chair, National Legal Aid & Defender
Association Corporate Advisory
Committee

Executive Vice President, General Counsel
& Corporate Secretary
Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Robin E. Abrams

Chief Administrative Officer, General
Counsel
SIGA Technologies, Inc.
Executive Vice President, General Counsel
vTv Therapeutics, LLC

Susan Alexander

Executive Vice President, Chief Legal,
Corporate Services and Secretary
Biogen Inc.

Davina Amiri

Associate Legal Counsel (GC)
World First

Shanti Ariker

SVP, General Counsel
Salesforce.org

John Attaway, Jr.

Senior Vice President, General Counsel &
Secretary
Publix Super Markets

Doria Bachenheimer

General Counsel and Chief Corporate
Compliance Officer
Artivest Co.

Richard Baer

Chief Legal Officer
Liberty Media Corporation

Sharon R. Barner

Vice President - General Counsel
Cummins, Inc.

Rasmani Bhattacharya

Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Gates Corporation

Cary S. Blancett

Senior Vice President, General Counsel
FedEx Ground Package System, Inc.

Arthur Block

Executive Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
Comcast Corporation

Daniel P. Blondin

Exec. VP/General Counsel
Navy Pier, Inc.

Thomas Bockhorst

General Counsel & Senior Research
Advisor
Colonial Consulting

Andy Branham

Executive Director
Counsel On Call

Alan Braverman

Senior Executive Vice President, General
Counsel and Secretary
The Walt Disney Company

Jeffrey S. Bromme, Esq.
Executive Vice President and Chief Legal
Officer
Adventist Health System

Marcus V. Brown
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Entergy Corporation

Maria Buckley
General Counsel
Joslin Diabetes Center

Michael Callahan
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
LinkedIn

Lisa Carstarphen
SVP & General Counsel
Arise Virtual

Jennifer W. Chaloehtiarana
General Counsel and Chief Compliance
Officer
Castlight Health

Mark Chandler
Senior Vice President and General
Counsel, Chief Compliance Officer
Cisco

Lynn Charytan
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Comcast Cable

Connie Chen
General Counsel, Compliance Officer &
Secretary
Quotient Technology Inc.

Jonathan Chiel
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Fidelity Investments

Arthur Chong
General Counsel and Secretary
Yahoo! Inc.

James Chosy
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
U.S. Bancorp

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General Counsel and Secretary
CoStar Group, Inc.

Rhonda L. Comer
General Counsel and Sr. V.P.
Legal Services
Nationwide Children's Hospital

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General Counsel
Linden Research, Inc.

Brian T. Corbett
Senior Vice President and General
Counsel
Main Line Health, Inc.

Kelly McNamara Corley
Executive Vice President, General
Counsel, and Secretary
Discover Financial Services

JoAnn Covington
Vice President, General Counsel and Chief
Privacy Officer
Rocket Fuel Inc.

Brian Cupka
Senior Vice President Human Resources &
General Counsel
Konica Minolta Business Solutions U.S.A.,
Inc.

Jennifer Curtis
Vice President and General Counsel
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions

Erin Dark
Corporate Counsel
HRS Erase, Inc.

Nithya Das
Senior Vice President and General
Counsel
AppNexus

William L. Deckelman, Jr.
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
DXC Technology Company

PascalDi Fronzo
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
Autodesk, Inc.

Michael Dillon
Executive Vice President, General Counsel
and Corporate Secretary
Adobe Inc.

Alex Dimitrief
Senior Vice President & General Counsel
General Electric

Matthew Dornauer
General Counsel
Phusion Projects

Paul Ehrlich
General Counsel - Global Brands &
Americas
adidas

Janet Eichers
Senior Vice President and General
Counsel
Kapsch TrafficCom North America

Meena Elliott
SVP, Chief Legal & Administrative Officer,
Corporate Secretary
Aviat Networks, Inc.

Michelle Fang
Chief Legal Officer
Turo, Inc.

Matthew Fawcett
Senior Vice President, General Counsel,
and Secretary
NetApp, Inc.

John Finneran
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary
Capital One

Ivan Fong
Senior Vice President, Legal Affairs and
General Counsel
3M

Jeanne Forneris
Senior Vice President, Strategy and
General Counsel
Bioventus LLC

Michael D. Fricklas
Executive Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
Viacom Inc.

StaceyFriedman
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
JP Morgan Chase & Co.

Suzy Fulton
VP, Operations and General Counsel
Appspace

Vijaya Gadde
General Counsel
Twitter

Heidi Garfield
VP, General Counsel
Shutterstock, Inc.

John Geelan

General Counsel and Secretary, Managing Director
Piper Jaffray Companies

Benjamin Ghess

General Counsel & Chief Compliance Officer
Human Resources Development Institute, Inc.

James Gilmartin

Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Bankrate, Inc.

Craig Glidden

Executive Vice President and General Counsel
General Motors Company

Marlo Go Stroud

General Counsel
Dialpad, Inc.

Stephen P. Gottesfeld

Executive Vice President and General Counsel
Newmont Mining Corporation

Alex K. Grab

General Counsel, Vice President – Strategic Relations, and Corporate Secretary
Electronics For Imaging, Inc.

Arnold S. Graber

Executive Vice President and General Counsel
Metalico, Inc.

Joseph T. Green

Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary
TCF Financial Corporation

Melinda Griffith

Chief Legal Counsel
Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy

Julie Gruber

EVP & Global General Counsel
Gap Inc.

Susan Hackett

CEO and CLO
Legal Executive Leadership, LLC

Chris Handman

General Counsel
Snap Inc.

Kimberley Harris

Executive Vice President and General Counsel
NBCUniversal Media LLC

Timothy P. Harris

Executive Vice President and General Counsel
Prudential Financial, Inc.

Brett Hart

Executive Vice President and General Counsel
United Continental Holdings, Inc.

Patricia Hays

General Counsel
Taco John's International, Inc.

Lucy Lee Helm

Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary
Starbucks

Brent Henry

Vice President and General Counsel
Partners HealthCare

Andrew Hoffmann
Vice President and General Counsel
Cosmo Corporation

Brian Holland
General Counsel
Global Knowledge

Duane D. Holloway
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Ascena Retail Group

Michael Holston
General Counsel and Executive Vice
President
Merck & Co., Inc.

William Hopping
General Counsel
Apple Leisure Group

Rena Hozore Reiss
Executive Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
Hyatt Hotels Corporation

Seth Jaffe
Senior Vice President and General
Counsel
Levi Strauss & Co.

Frank Jimenez
Vice President, General Counsel, and
Corporate Secretary
Raytheon Company

Laura Kadetsky
General Counsel & Secretary
New Leaders

Jonathan Kaplan
Chief Legal Officer, General Counsel and
Secretary
RetailMeNot, Inc.

James Kelleher
Executive Vice President & Chief Legal
Officer
Liberty Mutual Insurance Company

Corinne P. Kevorkian
Senior Vice President, Administration and
General Counsel
Whitsons Culinary Group

Amit Khanna
General Counsel
Knotel, Inc.

Susan Kovach
Vice President, General Counsel and
Secretary
Libbey Inc.

Hilary Krane
Executive Vice President, Chief
Administrative Officer & General Counsel
Nike Inc.

Wesley Kumagai
Vice President and General Counsel
Isuzu North America Corporation

John Kuo
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Corporate Secretary
Varian Medical Systems

Thomas Larkins
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Corporate Secretary
Applied Materials, Inc.

Max Laun
Vice President and General Counsel
Arconic

Susan Lees
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Allstate Insurance Company

Elise Leung
General Counsel
Appdynamics

Marc Levin
Senior Vice President, General Counsel,
and Secretary
Dana Incorporated

Marvin J. Levine
Executive Vice President, Chief Legal
Officer
GCP Inc.

Peter Lieb
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Aon plc

Allison Lucas
General Counsel
BuzzFeed

Bruce Lymburn
General Counsel and Secretary
Clif Bar & Company

Raymond J. Manista
Sr. Vice President, General Counsel &
Secretary
Northwestern Mutual

Darcy Manning
Chief Legal Officer, VP of Finance &
Secretary
DHC USA Incorporated

Christina Markell-Balleza
Managing Director and General Counsel
South Texas Money Management, Ltd.

Brian Martin
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
Juniper Networks

J. Kevin McCarthy
Senior Executive Vice President and
General Counsel
BNY Mellon

Sarah Hlavinka McConnell
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary
Xerox Corporation

Chrystal Menard
Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel
Cerus Corporation

Laurence Midler
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
CBRE

George Miller
Senior Vice President, General Counsel &
Secretary
West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

David Munn
General Counsel and Secretary
Pramata Corporation

Joshua Murphy
Chief Legal Officer and Secretary
Mayo Clinic

Adam Nagorski
General Counsel and Vice President,
Global Legal Affairs
Emergo Group

Carol Newman
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary
Confie Seguros

Paul Nightingale
Senior Vice President & General Counsel
HP Hood LLC

Michael J. O'Connor
General Counsel
MassMutual Financial Group

Andrew Ognall
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Umpqua Bank

Marie Oh Huber
Senior Vice President, General Counsel,
and Secretary
eBAY Inc.

Thomas S. O'Neill
Senior Vice President and General
Counsel
Exelon Corporation

Michael Parham
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary
RealNetworks, Inc.

Patricia Pastor
Vice President and General Counsel
Construction and Realty Services Group,
Inc.

Edward Pelta
Vice President, General Counsel &
Secretary
Gleason Corporation

Sloane Perras
Chief Legal Officer
The Krystal Company & On The Border
Mexican Grill & Cantina

Jennifer Pileggi
SVP, General Counsel & Secretary
Zuora, Inc.

Brett Pletcher
Executive Vice President, General Counsel
and Chief Compliance Officer
Gilead Sciences

Andrew Polovin
General Counsel
Uptake Technologies, Inc.

Jeffrey Pott
General Counsel
AstraZeneca

N. King Prather
SVP, General Counsel
Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina

Timothy Pratt
Executive Vice President, Chief
Administrative Officer, General Counsel
and Secretary
Boston Scientific Corporation

Kristina Reed
Chief Legal Officer
RE/MAX Gold

Kim Rivera
Chief Legal Officer & General Counsel
HP Inc.

Teresa Wynn Roseborough
Executive Vice President, General Counsel
and Corporate Secretary
The Home Depot

Michal Rosenn
General Counsel
Kickstarter, PBC

Thomas Sabatino
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel Law & Regulatory Affairs
Aetna

Jake Schatz
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Corporate Secretary
Electronic Arts

James Scott
General Counsel
CRB

Raymond Sczudlo
General Counsel
b.well

Jim Shaughnessy
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
Workday

Laureen E. Seeger
Executive Vice President & General
Counsel
American Express Company

Mark Shelnitz
Vice President, General Counsel and
Secretary
W. R. Grace & Co.

Jeffrey S. Sherman
Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
BD

Jeffrey Shrader
General Counsel and Chief Compliance
Officer
Fedbid, Inc.

Kevin Siebert
Vice President, General Counsel and
Secretary
Viavi Solutions

Craig Silliman
Executive Vice President of Public Policy
and General Counsel
Verizon

Liz Simon
General Counsel & VP, External Affairs
General Assembly Space, Inc.

Thomas Slaughter
Chief Strategy Officer and General
Counsel
Mittera Group

Margo Smith
Senior Vice President, Legal Affairs &
General Counsel
Marketo

Bradford Smith
President and Chief Legal Officer
Microsoft

Deirdre Stanley
Executive Vice President, General
Counsel, Secretary
Thomson Reuters Corporation

Laura Stein
Executive Vice President – General
Counsel and Corporate Affairs
The Clorox Company

Eric Steiner
General Counsel, Director of Claims and
Corporate Secretary
ABA Insurance Services

Jeremy Strauss
Vice President, General Counsel and
Secretary
NEC Corporation of America

Colin Stretch
Vice President and General Counsel
Facebook

Dennis J. Stryker
General Counsel
Rick Engineering Company

Colin Sullivan
Counsel
Patreon, Inc.

Kathy Surace-Smith

Vice President, General Counsel and
Corporate Secretary
NanoString Technologies, Inc

Scott Taylor

Executive Vice President, General Counsel
and Corporate Secretary
Symantec

Terry Theologides

Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
CoreLogic, Inc.

Diana Toman

Senior Vice President, General Counsel,
and Corporate Secretary
Compass Minerals International, Inc.

Michael Touff

Senior Vice President and General
Counsel
MDC Holdings, Inc.

Lawrence Tu

Senior Executive Vice President and Chief
Legal Officer
CBS Corporation

Kelly Mahon Tullier

EVP, General Counsel and Corporate
Secretary
Visa Inc.

Adam Umanoff

Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Edison International

Sharon Underberg

General Counsel, Secretary & Senior Vice
President
Eastman Kodak Company

Denise Ustariz

Vice President of Leasing and Counsel
Reliable Properties

Leila L. Vespoli

Executive Vice President, Corporate
Strategy, Regulatory Affairs and Chief
Legal Officer
FirstEnergy Corp

Wanji Walcott

Senior Vice President, General Counsel
PayPal Holdings, Inc.

Kent Walker

SVP & General Counsel
Google Inc.

Sam Walker

Chief Legal and Corporate Affairs Officer
Molson Coors Brewing Company

Hilary Wandall

General Counsel and Chief Data
Governance Officer
TRUSTe

Maureen Watson

Vice President and General Counsel
CQG, Inc.

Amy Weaver

President, Legal & General Counsel
Salesforce.com, Inc.

Rohan Weerasinghe

General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Citigroup Inc.

Philip Weinberg

Executive Vice President and General
Counsel
Comcast Spectacor

Michael Weinberg
General Counsel and Intellectual Property
Expert
Shapeways

Tony West
Executive Vice President, Government
Affairs, General Counsel and Corporate
Secretary
PepsiCo

Patricia M. Whaley
Vice President, General Counsel &
Secretary
Rexnord Corporation

Christine Wheatley
Group Vice President, Secretary and
General Counsel
The Kroger Co.

Allyson Willoughby
General Counsel
CareZone

Susan Wiseman
SVP, General Counsel and Corporate
Secretary
Appboy, Inc.

Jonathan Wright
General Counsel
QPharma, Inc.

Richard B. Yates
Chief Legal Officer and Corporate
Secretary
Manning & Napier Advisors, LLC

David Zapolsky
Senior Vice President, General Counsel
and Secretary
Amazon

Michael Zuckert
General Counsel
Silicon Valley Bank

Michael J. Zukerman
Chief Legal Officer
CSAA Insurance Group