The UAW urges Congress to support funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), the federal program that promotes equal access to justice in civil cases for low income and poor Americans. LSC funded programs provide legal representation in domestic violence, child support, consumer fraud, government benefits, and many other areas where legal assistance is crucial to maintaining the necessities of life for low-income Americans. The economic crisis has significantly increased the demand for representation, while funding to support these vital services has been reduced.

LSC is currently funded at $375 million, which remains significantly below its FY 2010 level of $420 million. The House FY2016 Appropriations bill (H.R. 2578) reduces LSC's funding to $300 million—a cut of 20%. If enacted, the proposed funding would diminish the federal commitment to Legal Services from $420 million in FY 2010 to $300 million in FY 2016—a total reduction of 29%.

Since 2010, funding cuts in LSC programs have caused significant reductions in staff which limit programs capacity to serve clients:

- From 2010 to 2013, cuts to LSC funding caused reductions in staff of more than 500 staff attorneys, 350 paralegals and nearly 1,000 support staff positions. Reduced staffing caused by funding cuts means that fewer clients are served.
- The $75 million cut proposed by the House Appropriations Committee would mean that an estimated 400,000 fewer clients would be served.

Funding civil legal services is a solid investment for the economy. LSC programs are preventative services, helping to maintain existing housing, provide income supports, health care and protection from abuse, thereby saving money on more costly crisis intervention for homeless shelters and emergency room visits. See, Laura K. Abel and Susan Vignola, Economic and Other Benefits Associated with the Provision of Civil Legal Aid, 9 Seattle Journal for Social Justice, 139-167 (2010).

In its FY 2016 budget request, LSC is seeking $486.9 million to help bridge the Justice Gap facing low-income Americans. Since 2008, when the current economic downturn began, the poverty population in the United States has grown by at least 16 percent. This is not the time to undercut the fundamental American commitment to equal justice for all.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies is expected to mark up its FY 2016 Appropriations bill Wednesday, June 10th. We request that you contact Chairman Shelby and Ranking Minority Member Mikulski and urge them to include a meaningful increase for LSC funding and steadfastly oppose any reductions to current funding levels.

For more information, please contact Gordon Deane, President
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