

**RESOLUTION
OF
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF NORTHWEST JUSTICE PROJECT**

**In Support of Enhanced Private Attorney Involvement
with LSC-Funded Programs**

Whereas, the Legal Services Corporation and the programs it funds, including Northwest Justice Project, have long recognized that the overarching values of private attorney involvement to LSC-funded programs are increased access, increased human and capital resources, and increased *pro bono* commitment; and

Whereas, at its April 2007 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation adopted Resolution 2007-003 supporting and encouraging private attorney involvement and urging governing boards of LSC-funded programs to collaborate with other organizations to effectively engage lawyers in *pro bono* representation and other services that benefit low-income persons; and

Whereas, the LSC Board of Directors resolution builds upon the following national LSC initiatives:

- The October 2005 LSC report, *Documenting the Justice Gap in America: The Current Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*, which found that 50 percent of the potential clients requesting assistance from an LSC grantee were turned away for lack of resources on the part of the program;
- The *LSC Strategic Directions 2006-2010*, which calls upon LSC to increase public awareness of and support for legal services to low-income persons in order to respond appropriately to more of their legal needs;
- The *LSC Performance Criteria*, which consider, in evaluating a program's legal representation and other activities intended to benefit the low-income population in its service area, whether that program effectively integrates private attorneys into its work in order to supplement the amount and effectiveness of its representation and other services;
- The Provision for the Delivery of Legal Services Committee of the LSC Board of Directors 2006 meetings, which highlighted the potential, opportunities and challenges of private attorney involvement and determined ways in which this critical resource can be used more effectively by LSC-funded programs as a means to help close the justice gap;
- The unanimous adoption in January 2007 by LSC Board of Directors of a strategic work plan entitled *Action Plan for Private Attorney Involvement: Help Close the Justice Gap, Unleash the Power of Pro Bono*, which highlights the benefits of

engaging private attorneys to help represent clients of LSC-funded programs and describes ways in which the LSC Board and staff will work to expand private attorney involvement.

- The American Bar Association’s Model Rule 6.1 and similar state bar rules note the professional responsibility of every lawyer to provide *pro bono* legal assistance to persons of limited means;

Whereas, the Washington State Supreme Court’s 2003 groundbreaking study on the civil legal needs of low-income and vulnerable people established that of the more than 85% of low income households in Washington State experience civil legal problems involving shelter, family safety, economic security or other basic needs, nearly nine out of ten receive no legal assistance whatsoever; and,

Whereas, significant incremental increases in public support for civil legal aid programs fall short of the additional resources identified by the Supreme Court’s Task Force on Civil Equal Justice Funding as required to address the unmet civil legal needs of low-income people in Washington State:

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Board of Directors of Northwest Justice Project, in an effort to help close the justice gap in Washington State, supports and encourages private attorney involvement with the Northwest Justice Project, the Washington Alliance for Equal Justice partners, and especially bar organized Volunteer Attorney Programs, and will endeavor to:

- Collaborate with Washington’s Supreme Court, State and Federal Judiciary, Washington’s Access to Justice Board, the Alliance for Equal Justice, the Washington State Bar Association, local and minority bar associations and their respective organized volunteer attorney programs, private firm *pro bono* programs and Washington law schools to develop and facilitate educational efforts that demonstrate the extent of the unmet civil legal need and encourage collective responsibility within the State of Washington by both public and private entities to help meet this unmet civil legal need;
- Collaborate with other organizations and entities in the State of Washington to develop effective strategies for engaging lawyers in *pro bono* representation and other services that benefit low-income persons;
- Develop strategies that support high quality *pro bono* legal services, including creative recruitment methods and innovative delivery models, attorney practice and continuing legal education rules, and training, mentoring, support, and recognition of volunteers.

Be it Further Resolved that the Board of Directors of Northwest Justice Project will promote, support and encourage private attorney involvement initiatives by publicizing and recognizing private attorney involvement in the work of Northwest Justice Project and

by collaborating with national, state and local organizations to create opportunities for such publicity and recognition.

Adopted by the Board of Directors of the Northwest Justice Project on July 21, 2007.

Michelle Gonzalez, Board Chair