

TEXAS TRAVELS TO D.C. TO ADVOCATE FOR LEGAL AID FUNDING

Last year over \$50 million was cut in federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding, resulting in a loss of \$6.2 million for Texas legal aid programs since 2011. With over six million Texans now qualify for legal aid, LSC funding for legal aid organizations is more critical than ever.

In response, the Lone Star State brought a Texas-sized team to the 2012 [ABA Day in Washington](#) on April 17-19th to advocate for federal funding of our three legal aid programs—Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Lone Star Legal Aid, and Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas. Organized by the ABA Governmental Affairs Office, and co-sponsored by the ABA Young Lawyers Division, National Conference of Bar Presidents, National Association of Bar Executives, and ABA Section Officers Conference, the 2012 ABA Day event brought together representatives from all 50 states to educate the 112th Congress and Obama Administration on issues of importance to lawyers, including civil legal services for the poor.

The Texas Access to Justice Commission prepared three teams of Texas lawyers, who met with 31 Texas Congressional Offices, including 18 elected officials, to discuss the need for Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding.



Senator Hutchison honored on April 17, 2012 with the American Bar Association Congressional Justice Award.



Texas team members at the 2012 ABA Day in Washington event. *Top row from left to right:* Pablo Almaguer, Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson, Harry Reasoner, Justice Nathan Hecht, and Dick Tate. *Bottom row from left to right:* Michelle Hunter, Terry Tottenham, Trish McAllister, Judge Lora Livingston, Betty Balli Torres, Roberto Balli, and Eduardo Rodriguez. *Not pictured:* James Sales, Buck Files, and Roland Johnson.

ABA Grassroots Advocacy Award

During ABA Day 2012 in April, the ABA presented a Grassroots Advocacy Award to the Supreme Court of Texas and to TAJF Executive Director Betty Balli Torres during a reception at the U.S. Supreme Court. The Texas Supreme Court, represented by Chief Justice Jefferson and Justice Hecht, was recognized for the key role it played in obtaining funding for Texas legal aid programs at a time when state funding was in serious jeopardy. Balli Torres was honored for her work on a key legislative victory that required the FDIC to fully insure IOLTA and her other efforts in Texas to obtain state funding for legal services.

Also during the ABA Day week, Justice Hecht, Judge Lora Livingston and Betty Balli Torres were invited to attend the White House Forum on the State of Civil Legal Assistance co-sponsored by the Legal Services Corporation. At the forum, President Barack Obama addressed a group that included U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, State Department Legal Adviser Harold Koh, and former U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, as well as six directors of LSC-funded programs from across the nation.

FY2013 LSC Funding Update

In April, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a FY2013 funding bill that allocates \$402 million for LSC—a **15.5% increase** from the FY2012 funding level of \$348 million. However, in the House, the CJS Subcommittee FY2013 appropriations bill only allocates \$328 million for LSC, a **\$20 million decrease** from FY 2012. Making matters worse, an amendment filed in the House this week recommends cutting LSC funding to a mere \$200 million for FY2013. If passed,

LSC funding would suffer a **\$128 million decrease** from FY2012. With 10% of the nation’s poor living in Texas, we cannot afford additional cuts to legal aid. The more than six million Texans who qualify for legal aid—including veterans, victims of domestic violence, children, and the elderly—cannot afford additional cuts to legal aid.

