

# Legal Aid is an Essential Long Term Investment for Minnesota Taxpayers

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## **FACT: Cutting Legal Aid Will Hurt the Courts**

**Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz** notes, "It is my experience that the legal aid delivery system **helps the judicial system be more cost-effective** by providing preventive educational materials, successfully resolving most matters through informal or formal negotiations, and advising persons against bringing non-meritorious cases."

**Legal Aid saved at least \$5.1 million in court time** last year. 3,072 Legal Aid cases were settled without further litigation or screened out for lack of merit. Only 10.5% of Legal Aid's cases went to full hearing last year.

**Chief Judges Kevin Burke (Hennepin County) and Thomas Mott (Ramsey County)** testified to the legislature that **cutting Legal Aid will hurt the courts**, making them less efficient and effective.

## **FACT: Legal Aid Programs Save the State Money**

Legal Aid secures over **\$9 million each year in child support** orders and Federal disability benefits; Legal Aid leverages over **\$10 million each year** in Federal, United Way, and foundation funding, and private attorney financial support.

Legal aid **saved government about \$3.96 million in shelter subsidy costs** by preventing homelessness in an estimated 2,650 cases last year.

## **FACT: Legal Aid Reduces Domestic Violence**

Economists analyzing DOJ statistics on declines in domestic abuse in the 1990s concluded "Legal services are **the only service that decreases the likelihood women will be battered**. Since legal services help women achieve economic power and self-sufficiency, **they are a good place to spend public money**."

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently reported that the **direct health-related cost of domestic violence in the U.S. is \$4.1 billion** per year. Reducing this costs saves Minnesota taxpayers money.

## **FACT: Legal Aid benefits the broader community**

Legal Aid helps families **break the cycle of abuse** and instability which domestic violence generates; Legal Aid **assists low-income farm families** to remain on their homestead or make the adjustment away from farming;

Legal Aid **stabilizes families in crisis**, including preventing homelessness and helping to repair substandard housing; and

Legal Aid **assists adults to move from welfare to work** by overcoming legal obstacles.

## **FACT: Legal Aid, despite its cost-effectiveness, has had to reduce staff and services by over 20% for 2002-03. A legislative cut will mean even more low-income families will be hurt.**

Starting Legal Aid salaries are now more than **\$9,000 less than judicial law clerk** salaries; Legal Aid salaries generally are **about 60% of other public lawyers**.

**Legal Aid is losing over \$4.5 million** over the next biennium in federal, foundation, Interest on Lawyer Trust Account (IOLTA) and other funding;

Because of funding losses, **Legal Aid has already lost 20% of its ability to serve clients**. More positions will be lost over the next year even if there is no legislative cut in 2003. This means they will have to **turn away at least 7,000 additional eligible clients** with critical civil legal needs in the coming year, thus **turning away over 27,000 people**. A 20% legislative cut will mean that by the end of 2004, **Legal Aid will lose 42% of its ability to help Minnesota families**.

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