

2017 LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY Campaign for Justice

“If the political liberty of a citizen means anything, it must mean opportunity to use the law.”

Thomas Ehrlich, First President of the National LSC, 1976



50 *Years* of free civil legal aid
50 *Years* of equal access
50 *Years* of justice





“The legal aid society is an agency of justice—doing what is not practicable for lawyers to do individually on any large scale.”

— Charles Evans Hughes,
ABA speech, 1920

Legal Services—the vehicle for providing free legal assistance in civil matters for people who cannot afford it—was born in the 60s.

The tumultuous decade’s essence was extremes: anger, rebellion, aspiration, hope, loss, pain, regrouping—in sum, a reach for justice. Since those early days, Legal Services here in New Jersey and across the nation overcame many challenges, not least of which were multiple attacks on funding. But through it all, we persevered.

We continued providing essential legal aid—representation, counsel, advocacy, information—because more and more supporters refused to turn their backs on the legal problems of people in need. People recognized that legal representation can provide real and immediate solutions to critical life problems.

The representation gap remains critical:

- There is no guarantee of an attorney in a civil legal cases.
- Over 2.7 million people live in poverty in New Jersey. They will face well over a million civil legal problems in the year ahead, threatening their homes, food, health care, jobs, education, physical safety, and family stability.
- When they do, they can turn to Legal Services for help.

We need your support to do more.

Your gift will help close the gap in access to representation and help ensure that all citizens, including our most vulnerable, receive fair and just treatment under the law.

In 1965, with the support of the American Bar Association House of Delegates, the newly-established national Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) created the Legal Services Program. By 1967, 13 local Legal Services programs had opened in New Jersey, along with the State Office of Legal Services, under the Department of Community Affairs. Amid civil disturbances in Newark, Plainfield, New Brunswick, and other cities, Legal Services attorneys began to ensure access to justice for the most disenfranchised residents of the state. The challenges were many, the successes frequent.

Over the next 50 years, programs were consolidated, resources pooled, technology introduced, efficiencies constantly achieved. For today's five regional programs with offices in all 21 counties, tied together through coordination by Legal Services of New Jersey, the mission remains unchanged—access to justice for people in poverty.

“There is a growing awareness across this country that the poor have been deprived of their just rights under the law and that effective, aggressive, competent legal services have not really been available.”

Sargent Shriver, first Director of OEO, 1965

*Offices in
every county*



The nearly 8 million clients helped by Legal Services programs in 50 years represent just a fraction of those that need and are eligible for services. 2.7 million people continue to live in poverty in New Jersey and nearly 40% of them are children.



Samson and his wife of 43 years have lived in Somerset County for all of their adult lives. Samson, who is blind, receives Social Security Disability payments and his wife has worked for years as a bus driver. Like so many people struggling to make ends meet, they have had numerous legal problems over the years and have always turned to Legal Services of Northwest Jersey for help. More than once, the help they received enabled them to avert homelessness for themselves and their children.

When every penny is accounted for, there are no extra funds to deal with even the most critical unplanned expenses. Private lawyer fees are not an option. Samson explains, “When you’re poor, living at the margins of the poverty level ... any disruption to your income—it just upsets everything.”

Samson has not only benefited from assistance through Legal Services, he has become an outspoken supporter of the program as well, quick to refer others in the community who find themselves in need of civil legal assistance.

“Simply because you are living at the poverty line, that does not mean that you should not have access to the judicial system.” *Samson, 2011*

Nearly **8 million**
clients helped

Of the 2.4 million cases handled since the inception of Legal Services of New Jersey, one-third involved housing and another third entailed family stability and safety. Other critical legal areas include public assistance and consumer rights.

Leslie was a flight attendant for 42 years and moved from Manhattan to the Jersey shore after retiring in 2008. After Sandy hit in 2012, she was approved for help from New Jersey and FEMA, but several years later, she was accused of fraud. She had failed to provide acceptable proof of residency, due to the fact that she had never transferred her driver's license to New Jersey or registered to vote. After reaching out to other private and non-profit organizations for help, Leslie was finally referred to Legal Services of New Jersey. Her attorney there was able to gather the documentation necessary to support her claim and remove the requirement that she repay all of the funds she had received. "She was wonderful ... She put up with me saying, 'But why do they need the same thing again? Won't they ever believe me?' And she's going, 'Yes—we'll take care of you, don't worry.' "



“Legal Services was a godsend for me. . . . It’s really nice to have somebody on your side fighting for you.”

Leslie, 2016

Over 2.4 million
cases handled

“Newark is Pushed to Build More Public Housing Units”

— *The New York Times*,
May 1998



The settlement reached by LSNJ and the city of Newark in 1989 is just one example of a major law change that continues to impact people today. The mandate of “one-for-one replacement” for every low-income housing unit demolished provided an essential baseline for desperately needed affordable housing stock.

Legal Services’ victories have produced major changes in housing, family, public entitlements and consumer law, with great beneficial impacts for disadvantaged people.



The Wynona Lipman Gardens apartments (above) were part of the replacement housing required when the Stella Wright towers (left) were demolished.

“Through its daily efforts, the Legal Services Program in my community brings to my constituents the concrete benefits of the work to which I have dedicated my career.”

*NJ Senator Wynona M. Lipman,
on the occasion of Legal Services’ 25th anniversary, 1991*

Major changes
in every area of the law

Five decades *of advancing justice*



At our
50th Anniversary
we rededicate
ourselves to
the continuing
struggle for justice.

**We hope you
will join us.**

Please support our work

Make your donation today at www.lsnj.org/cfj. With your help, we can be there for more of your fellow New Jersey residents as they fall on hard times and need legal help.

Now and into the future

When you make your tax-deductible gift to the 2017 Campaign for Justice, please consider making a multi-year pledge. Such a commitment to continued support allows us to plan our resource development and be more effective.

Please make
your donation
today.

Help ensure
fairness to more
people in need
with your
tax-deductible gift.

Thank you.



www.lsnj.org

www.lsnjlaw.org

www.probononj.org



Annually, the Campaign for Justice raises charitable contributions for New Jersey's non-profit Legal Services system, supporting all five regional programs, with branch offices in all 21 counties, and Legal Services of New Jersey.

Regional Programs

Central Jersey Legal Services

Essex-Newark Legal Services

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey

Northeast New Jersey
Legal Services

South Jersey Legal Services

Statewide Program

Legal Services of New Jersey

The mural on the front of this brochure, titled "I Saw a City Invincible," is painted on the Camden office of South Jersey Legal Services. It depicts clients and advocates of the program and some of their major achievements. The lead artist was Cesar Viveros.