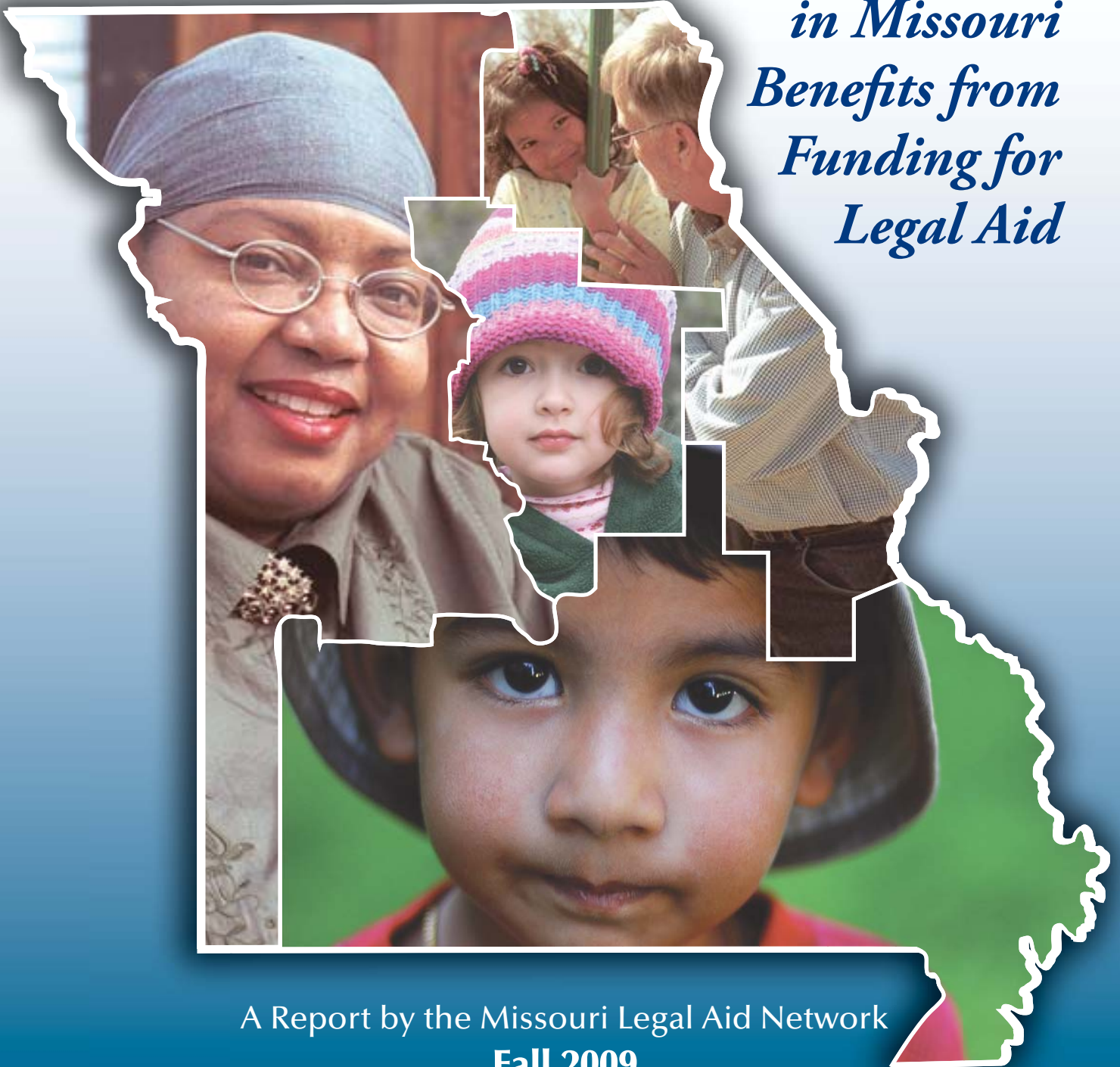


# INVESTING IN JUSTICE, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

*How Everyone  
in Missouri  
Benefits from  
Funding for  
Legal Aid*



A Report by the Missouri Legal Aid Network  
Fall 2009

## WHO WE SERVE AND HOW WE HELP



After 29 years of marriage, Susan's husband began threatening and abusing her. He also assaulted their 13 year old son repeatedly. Legal Aid got a Protective Order for her and stopped the violence. Now Susan

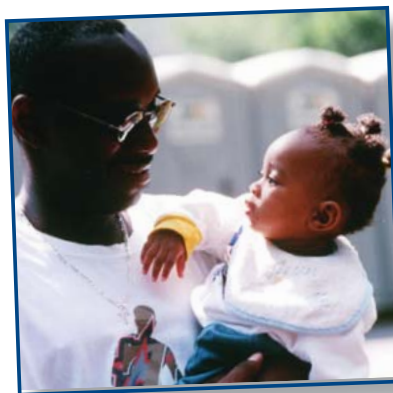
serves on the board of directors of Legal Aid of Western Missouri.

*See page 3 for more about who we serve and how we help.*

## THE WIDESPREAD BENEFITS OF LEGAL AID

While our work is focused on solving long-term problems for individuals and families, the impacts ripple outward to benefit the whole community.

In eliminating domestic violence, for example, we reduce crime, produce healthier, happier children who are less likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence and allow survivors to go back to living healthy, productive lives.



Legal aid produces \$1.84 in direct financial benefits for every dollar of funding we receive.

*See page 5 for more about the benefits of legal aid.*

# THE MISSOURI LEGAL AID NETWORK HELPS PEOPLE

## WHO WE ARE

*A NETWORK OF FOUR PRIVATE, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT...*

- Employs 103 full-time lawyers who handle 16,900 cases per year or more.
- Provides 33,000 clients and their household members each year with direct measurable outcomes such as protection from domestic violence and prevention of eviction from home.
- Has 16 offices statewide that provide services in every county in the state.
- Coordinates the efforts of 2,800 volunteer lawyers in private practice who donate 9,700 hours of volunteer services per year.
- Leverages our government funding with \$5.7 million annually of private contributions and grants.
- Produces \$1.84 of direct financial benefit to communities across Missouri for every dollar of funding we receive.

## WHAT WE DO

*PROVIDE FREE CIVIL (NOT CRIMINAL) LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME PEOPLE.*

**Since 2000, we have:**

- Secured Protective Orders for 17,600 victims of domestic violence. Research has proven that legal assistance is the single most effective way to stop domestic violence.
- Enabled 18,900 children and their families to avoid homelessness through our representation in eviction and foreclosure cases.
- Helped 3,700 people obtain access to health care who have disabilities that keep them from working. This improved their quality of life and reduced the cost of emergency-room medical treatment.
- Due to limited resources, we prioritize problems that seriously affect people's ability to provide for themselves and their families -- for example: domestic violence, home eviction or foreclosure, loss of basic income, access to medical care.

# How Everyone in Missouri Benefits from Funding for Legal Aid.

## WORKING TO FILL THE JUSTICE GAP

Legal Aid is effective; for example, we are successful in over 80 percent of the Social Security appeal cases we undertake. Yet our resources are so limited that we have to turn away tens of thousands of applicants each year who have nowhere else to turn. Studies show that only one in five people living in poverty who need legal help are able to get it from any source.

Missouri ranks 35th in the country in funding for legal aid. On a per-capita basis, Legal Aid funding in Missouri is 38 percent below the funding that programs in Nebraska and Illinois receive.

The promise of justice is little more than an empty pledge when our most vulnerable citizens do not have access to the legal help they need to protect them from fraud and deception and allow them access to basic needs including shelter, medical care and family safety.

*See page 7 for more about the Justice Gap.*

## THE MISSOURI LEGAL AID NETWORK IS A SOUND INVESTMENT.

Every \$1 million in new funding enables our programs to provide 1,900 more people with measurable positive outcomes that include families protected from domestic violence; veterans and disabled people provided with access to health care and income support; and children and families threatened with eviction enabled to stay in their homes.

*See page 9 for more about the return on investment in legal aid.*

## PRESERVING AND EXPANDING LEGAL AID WILL REAP BENEFITS FOR EVERYONE IN MISSOURI.

By investing in legal aid, Missouri's leaders can make "Equal Justice under Law" a reality. In the process, state leaders will multiply the investment many times in the form of a healthier economy and better lives for all Missourians.

*See page 10 for the conclusion of this report.*

# IN NEED EVERYWHERE IN MISSOURI.

## WHO WE SERVE

MISSOURI'S MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE INCLUDING...

- Victims of domestic violence.
- Individuals who are permanently and totally disabled and cannot work.
- Senior citizens.
- Families with children.

### Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM)

- St. Louis
- Hannibal
- Union

### Legal Services of Southern Missouri (LSSM)

- Springfield (2 offices)
- Rolla
- Cape Girardeau
- Charleston
- West Plains

### Mid-Missouri Legal Services Corporation (MMLSC)

- Columbia
- Jefferson City

### Legal Aid of Western Missouri (LAWMO)

- Kansas City (2 offices)
- Warrensburg
- St. Joseph
- Joplin

## WHO WE ARE NOT

PUBLIC DEFENDERS OR PRIVATE ATTORNEYS.

- We do not represent prisoners or defendants in criminal cases in state or federal court;
- We do not bring cases for money damages that private attorneys can handle for a fee.



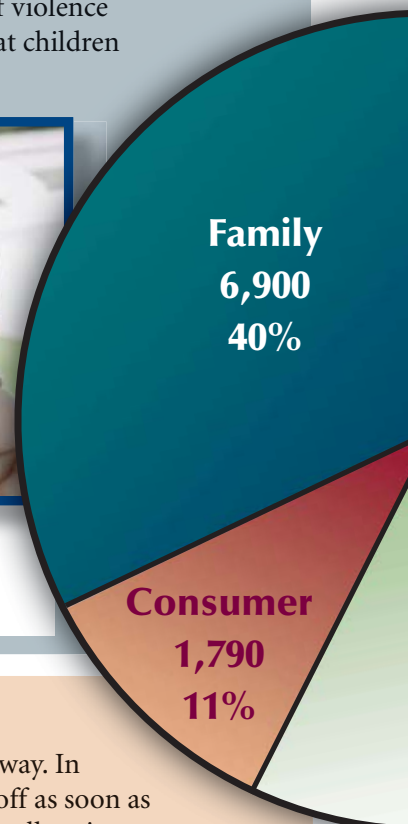
# WHO WE SERVE AND HOW WE HELP

## FAMILY SAFETY AND SECURITY 6,900 CASES IN 2008

- The vast majority of “family” cases handled by legal aid involve domestic violence. We focus on providing legal protection for victims, custody and support for children and separation or divorce from the abusive partners.
- There are over 40,000 incidents of domestic violence each year in Missouri, many of them repeats involving the same abuser and victim.
- Studies show that legal aid is the most effective public service for reducing domestic violence.
- Legal representation is essential. Most victims who go to Protective Order hearings without legal representation fail to obtain their orders and are still at risk from their abusers.
- Prevention of domestic violence saves taxpayers \$3,000 for each case.
- Prevention breaks the cycle of violence by reducing the likelihood that children will grow up to be abusers.

### Family Saved from Violent Husband.

“Maria” sought help from a Missouri legal aid advocate to divorce her abusive husband, who once set their house ablaze with Maria and her young child inside. The final blow came when Maria suffered a brain injury after her husband hit her in the head with the butt of his gun. Before her husband left jail again, Maria’s legal aid advocate secured Maria’s divorce and her custody of the child. The advocate also referred Maria to the Safe at Home Project through the Missouri Secretary of State’s office, in order to keep her new address confidential.



## CONSUMER ADVOCACY AND PROTECTION 1,790 CASES

- Legal aid advocates help people who are victims of fraudulent mortgages, home-repair swindles, predatory lenders, and other wrongful or illegal actions.
- Without legal help, these victims -- many of them elderly -- would lose savings and income they desperately need for food and shelter, winding up on welfare rolls.
- A little bit of legal help goes a long way. In many cases, opposing parties back off as soon as a legal aid advocate makes a phone call, writes a letter or files a legal action.

### WWII Veteran Spared Drastic Cut in Food Budget.

“Andy,” 84, served in World War II and lived on his disabled veteran’s pension. Andy sought help from Missouri legal aid after the state Department of Social Services suddenly reduced his food stamp allotment to nearly nothing. His legal aid advocate appealed the state’s action in local circuit court, which ruled that the state wrongly applied its own policies. Andy’s food stamps were restored, with full back benefits.



## HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND QUALITY 1,810 CASES

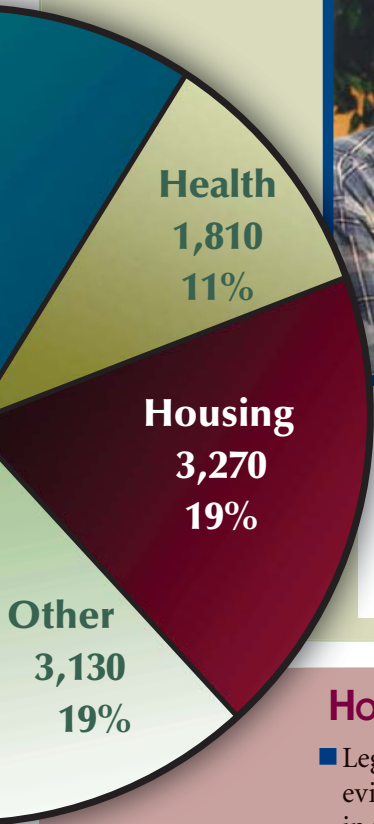
- Access to health care is often blocked by red tape. In a typical month, for example, 570 individuals who apply for Medicaid in the Kansas City area will be denied coverage.
- Forty percent of those denials will be in error.
- Legal aid wins 90 percent of the Medicaid appeals it handles.
- These cases are often life-saving. Patients without Medicaid coverage have been denied treatment for cancer, aneurisms and other life-threatening conditions.
- Legal aid can afford to serve fewer than 15 percent of the permanently and totally disabled clients wrongly denied Medicaid coverage.
- The results of this situation are catastrophic for the individuals and end up costing health care providers and Missouri taxpayers millions of dollars per year in avoidable emergency room visits.



### **Worker Overcomes Medicaid Refusal.**

“Scott” was a healthy, construction worker. Then he was diagnosed with throat cancer. With treatment, his odds of surviving were good, but without treatment he would almost certainly die. He could no longer work and applied for Medicaid, but was turned down. A Missouri legal aid lawyer represented him on his appeal and quickly got the decision reversed. Scott got the treatment he needed and may soon be able to go back to work.

Medicaid, but was turned down. A Missouri legal aid lawyer represented him on his appeal and quickly got the decision reversed. Scott got the treatment he needed and may soon be able to go back to work.



## HOUSING AND SHELTER 3,270 CASES

- Legal aid advocates represent clients in eviction and foreclosure proceedings and in the negotiation of settlements in housing disputes that keep families in their homes.
- Studies conservatively estimate that preventing homelessness for one family saves Missouri taxpayers an average of \$11,550 per year in emergency shelter costs.
- Additional economic benefits include preventing lost time from work and keeping children in school whose attendance would otherwise be interrupted by homelessness.



### **Swindlers Stopped from Stealing Woman’s Home.**

“Betty” thought she was securing a home equity loan to make repairs. Instead, a man posing as a mortgage broker tricked Betty into signing over the deed to her home, which the man then mortgaged for \$40,000 before fleeing. Making matters worse, the lender tried to foreclose on Betty’s home for the loan the man took. A Missouri legal aid attorney representing Betty drafted a lawsuit against the lender for fraud. Within an hour of being faxed a copy of the lawsuit, the lender faxed back confirmation that the home sale had been cancelled. Betty once again held clear title to her home.

# THE WIDESPREAD BENEFITS OF LEGAL AID

*While our work is focused on solving long-term problems for individuals and families, the impacts ripple outward to benefit the whole community.*

- **Helping those in need helps everyone.** By eliminating domestic violence, legal aid reduces crime, produces healthier, happier children who are less likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence and allows survivors to go back to living healthy, productive lives. We also reduce the costs of emergency-room medical treatment and police protection for victims and costs of prosecution and incarceration of abusers.
- **Keeping families in their homes saves tax dollars.** By helping clients avoid homelessness, we not only preserve their shelter, we save Missouri taxpayers over a million dollars annually in emergency shelter costs. This work also ensures that children who would otherwise miss school because of homelessness will be able to stay in school.
- **Bringing income into the state strengthens local economies.** By securing Social Security Disability Insurance benefits for a disabled person who is unable to work, we not only enable that person to live in dignity but also bring income into communities that would otherwise be lost to the state's economy. (See box, "The Economic Stimulus Effect", below). These federal dollars have a powerful multiplier effect by circulating immediately through the local economy, resulting in additional sales for businesses and more jobs for working Missourians.
- **Helping our clients, we make other institutions work better.** Lawmakers refer their constituents to us for legal help. Courts rely on us to help people navigate the legal system, negotiate solutions that otherwise would require litigation, and screen out non-meritorious cases before they enter the court system. Family shelters and public agencies work more efficiently by referring their clients to us for legal assistance.

Legal aid is cost-effective. Every dollar of revenue for a legal aid program produces \$1.84 of measurable economic impacts and many other benefits that are not quantifiable. (See box, "Economic Impact", on page 6). These dollars are in addition to the intangible benefits that come from providing fair solutions to critical legal problems faced by Missourians living in poverty.

## THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS EFFECT

1

### MONEY INTO THE STATE

Legal aid programs operations in 2008 brought federal dollars into Missouri that otherwise would be lost to local economies.

**\$14 million in federal dollars**

- Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income benefits secured for clients
- Federal operating grants to legal aid programs

2

### FEDERAL DOLLARS STIMULATE LOCAL ECONOMIES.

The money is spent immediately to purchase necessities. In turn, these dollars provide income for local businesses and wages for working Missourians.

#### Necessities for families

- Food
- Rent
- Prescriptions
- Utilities
- Transportation

3

### COMMUNITIES GET A BIG MULTIPLIER IMPACT.

Each dollar circulated 1.79 times.\*

**\$24.9 million\* for local economies**

- Income for local businesses
- Jobs for working Missourians

\*Total impact was estimated by applying the universally accepted U.S. Department of Commerce "Regional Economic Multiplier" for payments to low-income families in Missouri. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce "Regional Economic Multiplier" studies, each million dollars brought into Missouri from outside the state circulates through local economies 1.79 times and supports 48 jobs.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF LEGAL AID

In 2008, the total economic impact of legal assistance provided by Missouri legal aid programs was \$33.1 million, \$1.84 for every dollar of local, state, and federal funds invested.

### **THE IMPACTS INCLUDE:**

■ **\$24.9 million economic stimulus for local communities** (see graphic on page 5). Each federal dollar coming into our state as a result of legal aid's work circulates through local economies. These dollars include:

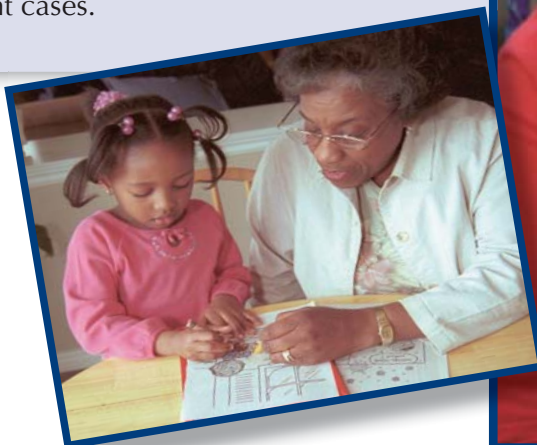
- ▶ *\$7.1 million in Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income attained for low-income Missouri residents;*
- ▶ *\$6.8 million in federal operating grants for legal aid programs.*

These federal dollars produced a \$24.9 million economic stimulus impact in 2008. The result: more sales for local businesses and more jobs for working Missourians.

- **\$4.5 million in Medicare and Medicaid benefits** to help low-income Missouri families obtain health care.
- **\$1.5 million savings in emergency shelter costs.** In 2008, 130 low-income families (with 350 family members) successfully avoided homelessness thanks to the efforts of Missouri legal aid advocates. Studies show an average savings of \$11,550 per family for Missouri taxpayers.
- **\$2.2 million savings in costs related to domestic abuse.** Studies indicate an average savings of \$3,000 per family in the costs of medical care for injured victims, targeted education and counseling for affected children, police resources and incarceration of abusers.

### **ADDITIONAL BENEFITS (NOT QUANTIFIED):**

- Savings from crime prevention and law enforcement assistance.
- Savings from keeping children in school whose attendance would otherwise have been interrupted by homelessness and/or domestic abuse.
- Efficiencies in Missouri courts made possible by legal aid assistance to clients and self-represented litigants, such as materials and training on how to follow court procedures.
- Additional tax revenues from jobs preserved as a result of legal aid employment cases.



# THE JUSTICE GAP

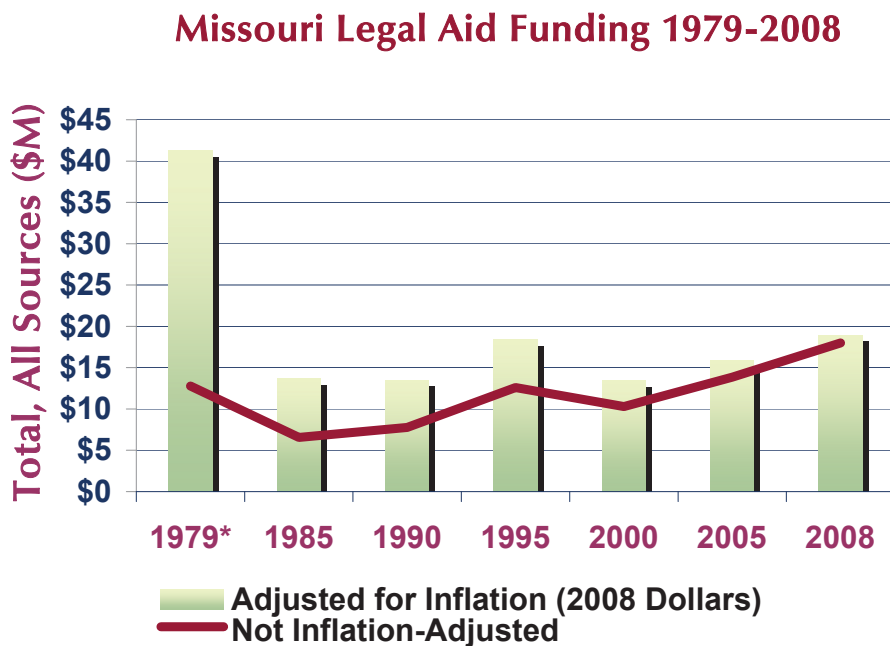


Legal aid is remarkably effective; for example, our legal aid advocates win more than 80 percent of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) appeal cases they handle, which provides food, clothes, access to medical care and shelter for seniors and disabled people and brings federal dollars into our state that otherwise would be lost to local economies.

Yet studies show that only one in five people living in poverty who have a legal problem are able to get the legal help they need. Our resources are so limited that we have to turn away tens of thousands of applicants each year who have nowhere else to turn. As a result,

## THE IMPACT OF INFLATION ON LEGAL AID FUNDING

Missouri's equal justice leaders have worked hard to reduce the disparity between the need for civil legal aid and the resources devoted to meeting it. Yet our gains have been modest and inflation has eroded much of the progress we have made. (See graph below.) The result is that today's funding, in real-dollar terms, is only half the level it was three decades ago. There are fewer Missouri legal aid lawyers, operating from fewer community offices, serving a 30-percent-larger poverty population, than there were in 1979.



\* In 1980, Congress cut federal funding 50 percent from 1979 level.

**Yet there is a bright side to this picture.** Over the same three decades, innovations -- including technology and closer collaboration between legal aid programs and our community partners -- have dramatically increased the return on investment in legal assistance for Missouri's poor.

Because the need is great, and because legal aid has a profound positive impact on families, communities and the state economy, every leader committed to the goal of "Equal Justice Under Law" will support greater funding for this effective, community-focused program.



## We Can Help Only a Fraction of Those Missourians Who Need It.

the lives of poor Missourians are made harder and the economic and other benefits that legal aid could provide are lost to our state.

Missouri ranks 35th in the nation in funding for legal aid, and places behind Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Illinois. Missouri's per capita legal aid funding is 38 percent behind the average of legal aid funding in Nebraska and Illinois.

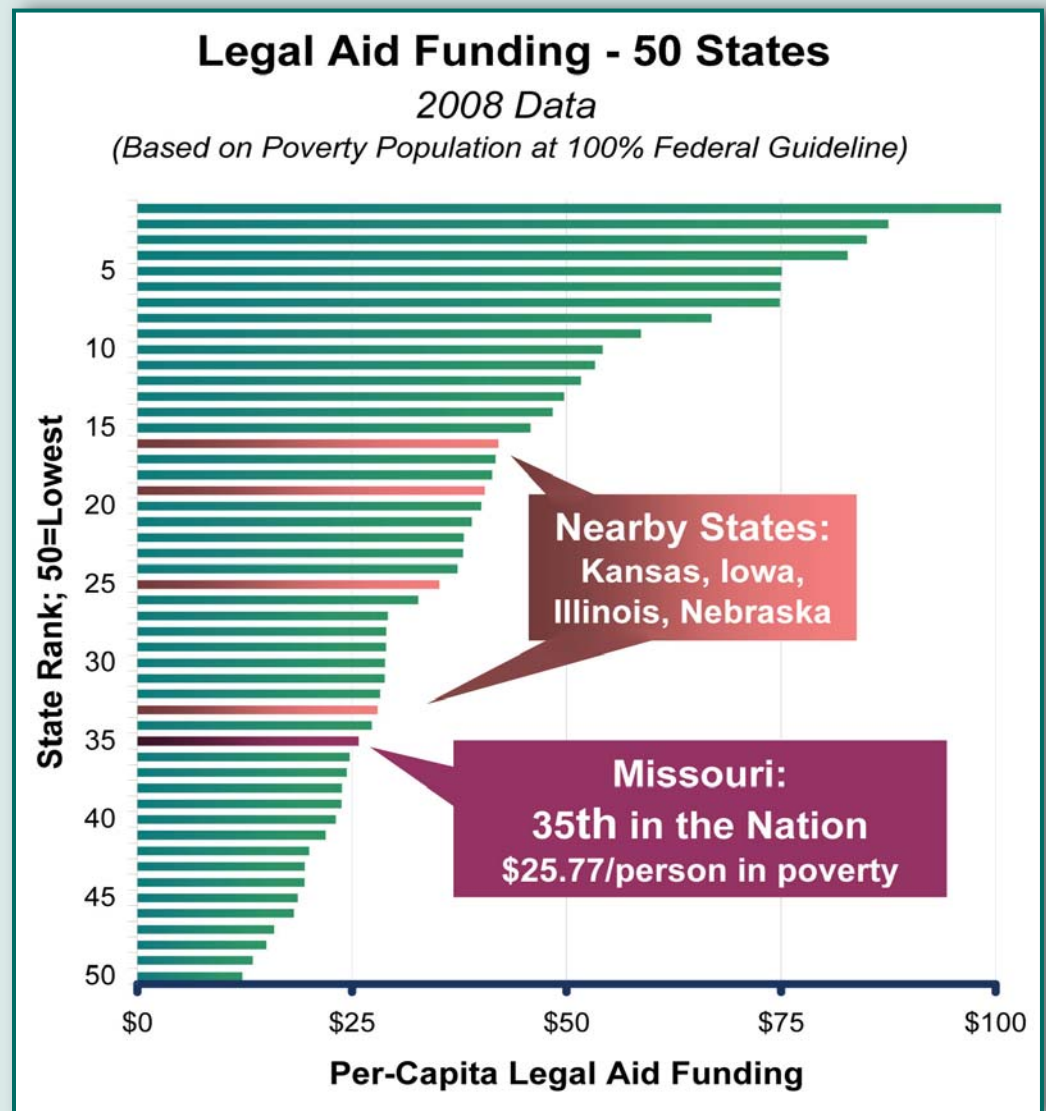
Inflation and the increase in poverty in our state have undermined our efforts to narrow the "Justice Gap." Today's legal aid funding, in real-dollar terms, is only half

the level it was three decades ago. (See box, "The Impact of Inflation on Legal Aid Funding" on page 7). During that same 30-year period, the population of Missourians living in poverty has grown by more than 30 percent.

The promise of justice is little more than an empty pledge when our most vulnerable citizens do not have access to the legal help they need to protect them from fraud and deception and allow them access to basic needs including shelter, medical care and family safety.

### MISSOURI IS 35TH IN THE NATION IN FUNDING.

- Missouri legal aid programs receive less than half the per-capita funding of our counterparts in the top 12 states.
- On a per-capita basis, Legal Aid funding in Missouri is 38 percent below the funding that programs in Nebraska and Illinois receive.



# THE MISSOURI LEGAL AID NETWORK IS A SOUND

- **Legal aid works.** With increased funding, we can help even more people, stimulating a ripple effect that expands economic benefits as well as intangible results for communities everywhere across Missouri.
- **We use our funds wisely.** Because funds are so limited, we strive continually to improve our efficiency and effectiveness. We apply state-of-the-art systems and standards we and our peers across America have developed over decades of legal aid practice. For example, we apply specialized case management software systems that enable us to share data, track intake patterns and measure the impacts of our work on behalf of our clients.
- **We deploy a high-quality legal staff.** We work to attract and keep the most highly qualified lawyers and paralegals. For example, we help attorneys obtain student loan repayment assistance that encourages promising young advocates to continue in legal aid rather than seeking higher-paying jobs elsewhere to support the burden of their student loans. We provide our advocates with training and mentoring that fosters use of best-practices in their work for clients.
- **We work with partners to leverage our impact.** Legal aid programs collaborate with private law firms, the courts and more than 100 agencies across the state that serve low-income Missourians -- please see box, "Leveraging Resources: Partnerships Multiply the Impact."

## LEVERAGING RESOURCES... *Partnerships Multiply The Impact*

- **Expanding affordable housing.** Legal Aid of Western Missouri has mobilized major Kansas City law firms in a project that is transforming abandoned housing into affordable housing in Kansas City. One law firm has logged more than 1,000 unpaid hours in this campaign over the last two years.
- **Reducing domestic violence.** Legal Services of Southern Missouri hosts a monthly gathering in Springfield of domestic violence shelter leaders from throughout the area aimed at improving services to families suffering from abuse. LSSM runs a statewide training of shelter workers via its videoconferencing facility, which saves time and reduces costs for participants spread throughout the rural counties across Missouri's southern tier.
- **Promoting public service by law students.** Mid-Missouri Legal Services Corporation, based in Columbia, is partnering with the University Of Missouri School Of Law to engage law students in the process of getting court protective orders for abuse victims. The MMLS advocates provide training, U-M law professors provide expertise and supervision, and the students attend court with the clients, thereby allowing these advocates to serve more clients and train future legal advocates.
- **Addressing the needs of adolescents who are homeless.** Legal Services of Eastern Missouri chairs a multi-agency task force that is seeking answers to the growing challenge of adolescent homelessness. The initiative allows LSEM to leverage significant public- and private-sector contributions in order to better define, prioritize, and address a difficult-to-tackle social problem.

Legal aid's partners include community crisis shelters, health care providers, and other human service organizations that serve the poor; leaders in the private bar including The Missouri Bar and local bar associations; members of the judiciary led by the Supreme Court of Missouri and other courts across the state; local governments; faith-based community institutions; and leading firms in the business community. Our funders such as the federal Legal Services Corporation, numerous United Way Agencies and other foundations monitor our work on a regular basis to make sure that we are doing high quality work for our clients.

- **We apply advanced information technology to expand our reach and promote quality.** For example, Legal Services of Southern Missouri has deployed a video conferencing network linking offices all across the state's rural southern tier, reducing staff travel and creating a community resource that connects legal aid with our partner agencies for meetings and training events. LSSM has expanded this network by partnering with the University of Missouri Law School's and Extension's TeleCenters, and rural areas' domestic violence shelters.
- **We apply our resources to areas of greatest need.** Our programs are required as a condition of our federal funding to make an annual review of our case acceptance criteria and make adjustments as needed to address emerging needs of our client community. In 2008, all four programs re-focused their work to address the surge in home foreclosures, evictions, predatory lending incidents, and domestic violence triggered by the deteriorating economy.
- **As a result of all these measures, dollars invested in legal aid go a long way.** Every \$1 million in new funding enables our programs to provide 1,900 more people with direct measurable outcomes including:
  - ▶ *Children and women escaping the ongoing nightmare of domestic violence;*
  - ▶ *Veterans and people with disabilities receiving health care or SSI benefits;*
  - ▶ *Families faced with foreclosure and eviction remaining in their homes; and,*
  - ▶ *People who have nowhere else to turn empowered to resolve other critical legal problems affecting their families, homes, and basic income.*

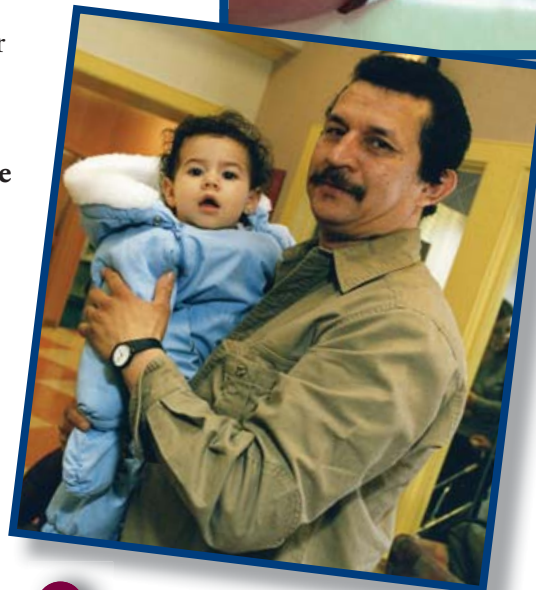
## CONCLUSION

*Preserving Legal Aid Will Benefit Everyone in Missouri.*

**Legal aid addresses the most critical legal problems** faced by more than 415,000 low-income Missouri households each year, and in the process generates \$1.84 in economic benefits and cost savings for taxpayers across the state for every dollar invested.

**Preserving and expanding funding for legal aid should be a priority** for every organization and leader committed to the goal of a fair and just society for all Missouri residents.

**By investing in legal aid, you as a leader can make "Equal Justice under Law" a reality rather than an empty promise.** In the process, you will multiply the investment many times in the form of a healthier economy and better lives for all Missourians.



# WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE MISSOURI LEGAL AID NETWORK

*Without Missouri's legal aid programs, thousands of low-income Missourians each year would not have access to the courts.*

*The programs handle Protective Order cases and Medicaid and SSI appeals in which the clients desperately need representation, when no other lawyers will take those cases. The legal aid attorneys not only give their clients access to the justice system, they make the system work more effectively.*

The Honorable William Ray Price, Jr.  
Chief Justice, The Supreme Court of Missouri

*Legal aid is an excellent partner in solving the long-term problems of our low-income clients.*

*Whenever we have a client who has a legal problem — whether they have landlord tenant issues, need assistance getting on to SSI or any other legal help — we know that when we refer them to legal aid they will get the help they need.*

John Joines, CEO  
Economic Security Corporation, Joplin

*So many of the people we work with have nowhere else to turn when it comes to legal assistance.*

*It is incredibly reassuring to know that the Missouri legal aid programs are available to provide excellent representation to those who would otherwise have to maneuver through what can be a very difficult system on their own.*

*Hands down, they are the first organization we call with any legal need our clients have.*

Erin Ercoline, Executive Director  
ALIVE; domestic violence  
agency in St. Louis

*Funding legal aid's work has been an excellent investment for our foundation. They have innovative projects and consistently get high quality results. We've had a number of grants with them where they have been able to use creative problem-solving to turn a dollar of funding into many dollars of medical care for their clients.*

Steve Roling, President/CEO  
Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City

*The need for legal help for people who cannot afford a lawyer is especially critical in times of economic distress. How fortunate for our community that the Missouri legal aid programs are always available to assist in providing these services.*

Stephen N. Limbaugh, Sr.; Partner,  
Armstrong Teasdale, LLP  
Former United States District Court Judge  
for the Eastern District of Missouri

*Access to legal advice and counsel are essential to all Missourians. Especially in challenging times such as these, the representation provided by Missouri's legal aid programs is crucial to these clients, our communities, and Missouri.*

R. Lawrence Dessem, Dean and Professor of Law  
University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law

