

FACT SHEET: THE JUSTICE GAP FUND

WHAT THE JUSTICE GAP FUND IS

- The Justice Gap Fund helps close the gap between the amount of legal services we can provide, and the legal needs of over 6 million indigent Californians who have little or no access to critical legal help.
- The Fund was created by Assembly Bill 2301, signed by the Governor in August of 2006 [Business and Professions Code sec 6033].
- This law authorizes the State Bar to facilitate contributions from its members and other donors to support legal assistance for low-income Californians.

HOW THE JUSTICE GAP FUND WORKS

- **Contributions:**
 - Donations can be made in conjunction with paying annual dues to the State Bar.
 - Contributions can also be made any time of the year either online through the State Bar website – <http://calbar.org/justicegapfund> – or by check payable to the State Bar (please include *Justice Gap Fund* on the check).
 - Contributions are tax-exempt to the full extent of the law.
 - Contributors of \$1,000 or more will receive special recognition as Benefactors.
 - Even small donations can be bundled into very significant funds – over \$2.5 million has been distributed to legal aid programs over the first three years. This is a very meaningful step toward closing the justice gap.
 - Legal aid providers leverage Justice Gap Fund support to help stimulate funding from foundations, the private sector, and government sources.
- **Administration:**
 - The Legal Services Trust Fund Commission and the California Access to Justice Commission jointly oversee this fund.
 - Contributions to the Justice Gap are administered by the Legal Services Trust Fund Program of the State Bar, which has an existing structure to provide grant funding to approximately 100 legal services providers statewide.
 - Using the existing infrastructure enables 100% of every donation to go to the legal aid organizations that the Justice Gap Fund supports.
 - Service providers are subject to continuous quality control oversight by the State Bar's Legal Services Trust Fund Program.

WHY THE JUSTICE GAP FUND IS NEEDED

- Legal aid is a critical component in improving trust and confidence in the justice system.
- This Fund helps legal aid programs ensure that even the vulnerable and indigent have access to justice:
 - Domestic violence and elder abuse victims need stability and safety
 - Veterans need safe, dry places to live
 - Families need to avoid homelessness and to establish guardianships
 - Children need help getting access to health care and special education services
- California ranks 22nd nationally in terms of legal aid funding, at only \$16.25 per poor person. Only one third of our low-income population receives any help at all for their legal problems, and even those often receive only part of the legal help they actually need. (See Action Plan for Justice, A Report of The California Commission on Access to Justice, 2007.)
- In California there is an average of over 6,000 eligible clients for each legal aid lawyer. Service providers are reporting up to six-fold increases in requests for service, due to the recent economic downturn.
- Legal aid programs need to be able to rely on this fund as a source of ongoing support so that they don't let their clients down.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- visit <http://calbar.org/justicegapfund>
- Contact the Legal Services Trust Fund Program at (415) 538-2252 or justicegapfund@calbar.ca.gov