



Alaska Legal Services Corporation

SB49: Amending the Civil Legal Services Fund

SB49 seeks to amend AS 37.05.590 (the statute creating the Civil Legal Services Fund) so that up to 25% of Court System filing fees can be appropriated by the Legislature to the Civil Legal Services Fund each year to provide access to the civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans with critical legal needs.

Why is Adequate Funding for Civil Legal Aid Important?

Civil legal aid ensures fairness for all in the justice system. It provides access to legal help for people who cannot afford it otherwise, to protect their livelihood, their health or their family. Access to the justice should not depend on how much money you have. We need civil legal aid to ensure that the very principle our founding fathers envisioned remains alive: justice for all, not the few who can afford it.

SB49 is Needed to Bridge Alaska's Growing Justice Gap

The "justice gap" is the difference between the level of legal assistance available and the level that is necessary to meet the needs of low-income individuals. **At current funding levels, ALSC turns away hundreds of families seeking assistance each year due to resource limitations.**



There is only one ALSC staff attorney available for every



3,465 Low Income Alaskans.

Current Funding

The amount available for appropriation into the fund depends on whether the state has collected any punitive damages, which has not happened for the last three years.

State appropriations to ALSC steadily declined from a high of \$1.2 million in 1984 to \$550,000.

ALSC State Appropriation

| Year | Total Appropriation to ALSC | Population Below Poverty Level |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1984 | \$1.2 Million |  41,616 |
| 2014 | \$0.5 Million |  100,498 |

Source: 1980 Census of Population, PC80-1-C1 "General Social and Economic Characteristics", table 245.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 3-Year American Community Survey.