



# ALASKA LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Providing FREE high-quality civil legal aid to Alaskans since 1967

## HB 48: Amending Civil Legal Services Fund

Sponsor: Rep. Hannan | Co-Sponsors: Rep. Fields, Eischeid, Schrage, Jimmie

### OVERVIEW

HB 48 would amend AS 37.05.590, which created the Civil Legal Services Fund, to allow the Legislature to appropriate up to 25% of Court System filing fees each year to support civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans with critical legal needs. This would create a more stable, dedicated funding stream for Alaska's only statewide civil legal aid provider.

### CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND

The Civil Legal Services Fund was established as a special account in the general fund. It was amended in 2018 with nearly unanimous support after widespread bipartisan acknowledgement that ALSC was severely underfunded.

At the discretion of the Legislature, funds are deposited from Alaska's 50% share of civil punitive damage awards and up to 10% of court filing fees received in the most recent fiscal year. These funds are then available to supplement ALSC's appropriation.

The availability of funds depends on court system filings and punitive damage awards to the state, causing the amount available from the fund to vary widely. Since the fund was established in 2007, available funds have fluctuated from \$0 to \$360,000.

In SFY26, \$312,600 was appropriated from the fund to ALSC. In SFY27, the amount available for appropriation is \$306,400.

### AMENDING AS 37.05.590

Amending the fund to allocate 25% of court filing fees is essential to meet the growing demand for civil legal assistance. Since the 2018 amendment, community needs have continued to rise. Combined with inflation, this demand has further strained ALSC's resources. It is time to amend the fund again.

Increasing the fund's allocation will help close Alaska's civil justice gap and deliver life-changing legal aid to vulnerable residents. As the state's primary civil legal resource, ALSC receives most legal service referrals but faces rising demand and declining support.

The charts below show the growing gap between ALSC's client population and state funding, which has dropped from \$1.2 million in 1984 to \$712,600 in 2025. At current funding levels, ALSC must turn away thousands of families each year due to limited resources.



### MAKING THE FUND MORE EFFECTIVE

Current court filing fees go to the general fund. By appropriating 25% of these fees to the Civil Legal Services Fund, additional revenue will be generated to address unmet life-changing civil legal needs statewide.





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## LEGAL AID IMPORTANCE

Civil legal aid promotes fairness in the justice system by ensuring access to legal help for people who cannot afford it, protecting their livelihoods, health and families. It helps uphold the nation's founding principle of justice for all, not only for those who can afford representation.

## WHO LEGAL AID HELPS

- Seniors
- Veterans
- Disabled Alaskans
- Domestic violence survivors
- Low-income workers & consumers
- Children

## HOW LEGAL AID HELPS

- Prevents homelessness
- Stops domestic violence
- Protects veterans and seniors
- Secures child support
- Preserves access to lawful benefits
- Reduces public system costs

## WHY THE FUND IS NECESSARY

- ◆ Nearly every state in the United States supports civil legal aid through some combination of court fees, fines, and in many cases, through direct state appropriations.
- ◆ A 2017 Alaska Court System Access to Justice Committee report identified ALSA as the state's primary resource for civil legal issues, receiving most referrals, followed by the court system and its Family Law Self-Help Center.
- ◆ The American Community Survey estimates that 1 in 7 Alaskans, about 98,225 people, live below 125% of the federal poverty level, a number that continues to rise. For many, access to civil justice depends solely on ALSA.
- ◆ A 2000 Alaska Supreme Court task force recommended restoring ALSA's state funding to 1980s levels. Adjusted for inflation and poverty growth, this would exceed \$5 million in 2025. ALSA's 2026 total operating budget is \$9.5 million.



There is only one (1) ALSA attorney for every 10,000 eligible Alaskans.



ALSA is forced to turn away 50% of applications due to lack of resources.

Each year, Alaska households eligible for ALSA services face an estimated **38,308** legal issues. A study by the American Bar Association found that low-income households experience an average of 1.01 civil legal problems annually, with about half facing at least one issue each year, often involving multiple, related problems.

## ADDRESSING ALASKA'S GROWING CIVIL JUSTICE GAP

The "justice gap" is the difference between the legal help available and the legal help needed by low-income Alaskans. At current funding levels, ALSA is forced to turn away thousands of families each year due to limited resources.





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## FACT SHEET: ALSC OVERVIEW

### ABOUT ALSC

Established in 1967, Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit law firm providing free civil legal aid to low-income Alaskans, promoting stability, safety, and health.

With 10 offices and a strong volunteer network, ALSC serves individuals and families in every Alaska community.



**5,455**  
Cases handled  
in FY25



**14,919**  
Alaskans helped  
in FY25



### CIVIL LEGAL AID

Legal aid organizations such as ALSC provide free legal help so all Americans can access and navigate the civil justice system. Unlike criminal cases, there is no constitutional right to an attorney in civil matters.

This leaves many low-income people facing life-altering challenges such as domestic abuse, eviction or denied benefits without legal representation. Civil legal aid protects their safety, homes and families. It upholds a core American value: justice for all, not just those who can afford it.

**Low-income Americans receive little or no legal help for 92% of their significant civil legal needs.** Source: Legal Services Corporation (LSC), 2022 Justice Gap Report

### ALSC SERVICES

ALSC provides free civil legal aid to help Alaskans protect their housing, safety, health and financial stability. This preventive legal aid, including eviction and foreclosure defense, keeps families housed and helps reduce homelessness, while also securing protective orders for survivors of domestic violence and helping veterans and seniors obtain earned benefits.



**LEGAL REPRESENTATION**  
Advice to full court  
representation for eligible  
clients.



**EDUCATION & OUTREACH**  
Clinics, helplines, online  
resources and legal forms for  
all Alaskans.



**PRO BONO PROGRAM**  
Award-winning network of volunteer  
attorneys and justice workers who  
handle pre-screened cases.





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## FACT SHEET: ALSC OVERVIEW, CONT.

### ALSC FUNDING

ALSC receives funding from multiple sources, including federal, state and local governments, tribal organizations, foundations and private donations. For more than 55 years, ALSC has consistently received a state appropriation under every administration. This appropriation is managed through the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, specifically within the Division of Community and Regional Affairs.

In addition, the Civil Legal Services Fund ([AS 37.05.590](#)), passed by the 30th Alaska State Legislature with near-unanimous bipartisan support, supplements ALSC's appropriation.

### ECONOMIC BENEFIT OF ALSC

Civil legal aid generates an estimated 7-to-1 return on investment for Alaska's governments, businesses and communities. ALSC helps reduce homelessness, increase access to federal benefits for children, veterans, seniors and people with disabilities, and lower the incidence of domestic violence, producing measurable savings for public systems and stronger, stable communities.\*

### ALSC IMPACT



Prevents unjust outcomes



Stabilizes communities



Expands access to justice



Reduces public costs

**"As a former Attorney General for the State of Alaska, and now as a U.S. Senator, I have worked closely with Alaska Legal Services and have seen firsthand the invaluable representation it offers Alaskans."** - U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan

### HELPING THE ALASKA COURT SYSTEM

ALSC is the most frequently referred legal service provider in Alaska, followed by the Alaska Court System and its Family Law Self-Help Center. By providing legal representation and self-help resources, ALSC helps reduce unnecessary litigation, lower court costs and improve the efficiency of civil proceedings, allowing parties to navigate the court system more effectively.

### SUPPORTING CIVIL LEGAL AID

ALSC's work helps ensure that the fundamental American value of "equal justice under law," engraved on the U.S. Supreme Court building, is a reality for Alaskans regardless of income. Funding for ALSC is critical to uphold the nation's founding principles of liberty and justice for all.

\*Source: Legal Services Corp., "Civil Legal Aid Yields \$7 for Every \$1 Invested," economic brief, 2024. Available at: <https://www.lsc.gov/press-release/civil-legal-aid-yields-7-return-every-1-invested-lsc-economic-brief-shows>





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## FACT SHEET: ALSC COMMUNITY IMPACT



### 10 Offices

Serving all Alaska's communities



### 5,455

Cases handled in FY25



### 14,919

Alaskans helped in FY25



### 86%

ALSC positive case results



### 7 to 1

Legal aid's return on investment



### \$9.5M

2026 Annual Budget



### 23,781

Hours of legal services in FY25

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is a private nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal aid to low-income Alaskans. Its work helps ensure equal access to justice and supports the state's most vulnerable populations.

ALSC generates millions of dollars in measurable economic benefits each year. Through partnerships with local governments, nonprofits and tribal organizations, ALSC maximizes resources and maintains a critical presence in both urban and rural Alaska.

As the only private provider of comprehensive civil legal aid in many of these communities, ALSC helps ensure no Alaskan is left without access to legal help. Every dollar invested in ALSC generates an estimated \$7 in economic impact, benefiting clients, communities and the state.\*

**"Rural areas face significant barriers to justice—geographic isolation, limited broadband access, unique cultural traditions, and, in tribal areas, their own legal systems. At its core, it's a numbers problem: there just aren't enough lawyers in rural communities."**  
— John Levi, Board Chair, Legal Services Corporation

## ALASKA'S JUSTICE GAP

The justice gap is the significant divide between the civil legal needs of low-income individuals and the availability of resources to meet those needs. This gap leaves many people without access to legal help for critical issues such as housing instability, domestic violence, or denial of essential benefits.

In Alaska, this challenge is amplified by its vast geography and remote communities, creating legal deserts where civil legal aid is scarce or entirely unavailable, leaving many to face complex legal issues alone.



**There is only one (1) ALSC attorney for every 10,000 eligible Alaskans.**



### <50%

ALSC average acceptance rate due to limited resources



### 182 Alaskans

Could be served with \$100K in additional funding

\*Source: Legal Services Corp., "Civil Legal Aid Yields \$7 for Every \$1 Invested," economic brief, 2024. Available at: <https://www.lsc.gov/press-release/civil-legal-aid-yields-7-return-every-1-invested-lsc-economic-brief-shows>





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## FACT SHEET: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### OVERVIEW

Alaska Legal Services Corporation is Alaska's largest provider of free civil legal aid for survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

ALSC helps individuals and families achieve safety and stability through victim-centered legal representation, advice and self-help resources. Staff attorneys receive regular training to provide trauma-informed, holistic legal aid. ALSC delivers services statewide, including in Alaska's most remote communities.



Nearly 58% of adult women in Alaska have experienced intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or both in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>



Intimate partner violence is 4x more common among people earning below 100% of the federal poverty level than among those earning above 400%.<sup>2</sup>



In the past year, recent survivors of domestic violence received little or no legal help for 88% of their civil legal problems.<sup>3</sup>



Access to legal aid increases the likelihood that survivors will obtain protective orders, reducing risk of further violence.<sup>4</sup>

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS SERVED

In FY25, ALSC's legal aid services impacted **881** domestic violence survivors and **2,372** individuals in **105** Alaska communities. Of the total households served, **63%** included children.

#### CLIENT SUCCESS STORY: A NEW START FOR A MOTHER AND SON

At 18, Megan\* came to ALSC seeking help to escape escalating abuse from her boyfriend, who is also the father of her infant son. He had been assaulting her since she was 16, and the violence worsened when he attacked her twice in front of their baby, leaving her with bruises and a cut lip.

After securing a short-term protective order, Megan turned to ALSC for support. ALSC represented her in court, where she was granted a year-long protective order, full custody of her son, child support, and supervised visitation for the father. With ALSC's help, Megan and her baby now have safety and stability.

*\*name changed for privacy*

1. UAA Justice Center, 2020 Alaska Victimization Survey, <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/justice-center/avs/>  
2. Supporting Survivors: The Economic Benefits of Providing Civil Legal Assistance to Survivors of Domestic Violence. Institute for Policy Integrity at New York University School of Law. July 2015 Available at <http://policyintegrity.org/documents/SupportingSurvivors.pdf>  
3. Legal Services Corporation. Domestic Violence. See <https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/domestic-violence/>  
4. International, Household Poverty and Nonfatal Violent Victimization, 2008–2012, Table 2, Rate of violent victimization, by victim-offender relationship and poverty level, 2008–2012, see <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/hpnv0812.pdf>.





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## FACT SHEET: SENIORS/ELDERS

### OVERVIEW

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is the only statewide provider of comprehensive civil legal aid for Alaska's growing senior population.

ALSC works to safeguard the rights and dignity of older Alaskans through legal representation, advice and self-help resources. Its attorneys and advocates address a wide range of issues, including access to earned benefits, protection from financial exploitation, neglect and abuse, and unsafe or unstable housing.

ALSC also helps seniors plan for the future by preparing wills, advance health care directives and powers of attorney. This work helps prevent legal crises, reduces stress for families and lowers costs for the health care and court systems.



Alaska has the fastest-growing 65+ population per capita in the nation, with continued growth projected.<sup>1</sup>



A statewide needs assessment identified protection from financial exploitation, abuse and neglect as a top justice priority for older Alaskans.<sup>2</sup>



Alaska seniors face the nation's highest costs for skilled nursing, home health care and adult day services.<sup>3</sup>



Seniors and elders rely on free civil legal aid, such as ALSC, to navigate the justice system and secure vital health, income and social services.

### SENIORS/ELDERS SERVED

In FY25, clients age 60 and older made up **30%** of those served, or **1,567** people, impacting **2,665** individuals and family members across **155** Alaska communities. **44%** had at least one disability.

### CLIENT SUCCESS STORY: SECURING STABILITY & INDEPENDENCE

Elizabeth\* is an elderly abuse survivor from a small Alaskan village. After her doctor recognized signs of abuse, she was referred to ALSC for help. With the assistance of an ALSC attorney, Elizabeth not only secured a one-year protective order, ensuring her immediate safety, but also received crucial legal support with her estate case and the execution of a will.

By addressing these legal matters, ALSC helped prevent potential complications giving Elizabeth peace of mind. With her legal affairs in order, Elizabeth returned to her village empowered and protected, thanks to ALSC's comprehensive and compassionate support.

*\*name changed for privacy*

1. 2021 Profile of Older Americans, Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <https://acl.gov/aging-and-disability-in-america/data-and-research/profile-older-americans>

2. State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Alaska Commission on Aging, Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2016-2019 Available at: [http://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Documents/ACoA\\_StatePlan\\_FY16-FY19.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/acoa/Documents/ACoA_StatePlan_FY16-FY19.pdf)

3. Alaska Commission on Aging Senior Snapshot: Older Alaskans in 2020/21 Available at: [https://health.alaska.gov/acoa/Documents/ACoA\\_seniornapshot\\_2022.pdf](https://health.alaska.gov/acoa/Documents/ACoA_seniornapshot_2022.pdf)





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## FACT SHEET: VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

### OVERVIEW

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is the only statewide provider of civil legal aid for veterans, active-duty service members and their families.

ALSC provides legal representation, advice and self-help resources through attorneys trained to address the unique needs of the military community. ALSC co-chairs the Service Member, Veteran and Military Families Section of the Alaska Bar Association and advocates for veterans through statewide initiatives.

ALSC helps service members and veterans secure protective orders, prevent domestic violence, and obtain custody and financial support. It assists military families facing unlawful eviction, helps veterans access SSI, SSDI and VA benefits, and provides support with past-due child support and income garnishments. ALSC also advocates for needed housing repairs and defends against wrongful denial of federal food assistance for service members and their families.



Alaska has the highest per-capita veteran population in the nation at 11%, compared with a national average of 6%.<sup>1</sup>



Eviction, foreclosure and child support legal aid are among the top unmet needs for homeless veterans.<sup>2</sup>



Veterans are more likely to experience chronic health issues and barriers to care.<sup>3</sup>



When basic needs are at risk, civil legal aid is often the most effective solution for veterans.

### VETERANS SERVED

In FY25, ALSC's legal aid services impacted **317** veterans and family members in **92** Alaska communities. Of those impacted, **58%** were seniors aged 60 or older, **32%** had children in the home and **46%** had at least one disability.

### CLIENT STORY: JUSTICE FOR A 90-YEAR-OLD VETERAN

Peter\*, a 90-year-old Veteran, was on the verge of losing his home due to a legally defective foreclosure by a big bank. With limited income and nowhere else to go, he and his wife faced eviction. Despite his age, Peter continued working alongside his son to make ends meet.

An ALSC attorney stepped in, successfully challenging the foreclosure and keeping the couple in their home. Without our help in this complex legal battle, Peter and his wife would have lost the place they have called home for decades.

*\*name changed for privacy*

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2101 Available at: <https://data.census.gov/table?q=veterans&tid=ACSS1Y2021.S2101>

2. Journal of Public Health, Needs of Homeless Veterans: 5 years of the CHALENG Survey 2012-2016 Available at <https://academic.oup.com/jpubhealth/advance-article/doi/10.1093/pubmed/fdy076/4992164>

3. Supporting United States Veterans: A review of veteran-focused needs assessments from 2008-2017. University Park, PA: Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State, Available at: <http://www.hjfcps.org/site/assets/files/1521/supportusveterans2017nov.pdf>





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## FACT SHEET: ALSC CASE RESTRICTIONS

### OVERVIEW

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) provides legal aid, ensuring people can protect their livelihoods, health, housing, and families. Examples of legal aid include fighting unlawful foreclosure, obtaining protective orders against abusive spouses, securing veterans' benefits earned through military service, and protecting consumers from predatory practices.



DEBT AND FRAUD



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



FAMILY LAW



HEALTH CARE



HOUSING



LIFE PLANNING



VICTIMS' RIGHTS

### ALSC CASE RESTRICTIONS

As a recipient of federal funding, ALSC is **PROHIBITED** by federal law (see 42 U.S.C. 2996 et seq., 45 CFR Part 1610) from participating in the following types of cases:

- Abortion-related litigation of any kind
- Cases where a private attorney would take the case on a contingency fee basis
- Class actions
- Criminal cases
- Redistricting activities
- Representation of prisoners
- Representation of those evicted from public housing due to illegal drug use
- Representation of undocumented immigrants (except where domestic violence or human trafficking is involved)

### ALSC YEARLY AUDITS

ALSC takes these case restrictions very seriously and is audited yearly to ensure compliance with any and all regulations and restrictions.

