



March 23, 2023

Senator Forrest Dunbar  
State Capitol Room 125  
Juneau AK, 99801

**Subject: Support for SB 104, Civil Legal Services Fund**

Dear Senator Dunbar,

The Alaska Native Justice Center (“ANJC”) is an Alaska Native Tribal organization established in 1993 to address Alaska Native people’s unmet needs within the civil and criminal justice system, in response to the increasingly disproportionate rates of victimization, incarceration, and other justice-related issues impacting Alaska Native people statewide. ANJC offers justice related services to Native people, regardless of Tribal affiliation or original home area and our mission is Justice for Alaska Native people.

We are pleased to offer our support for SB 104, a bill to amend AS 37.05.590 (the statute creating the Civil Legal Services Fund) so that up to 25% of the filing fees paid annually to the Alaska Court System can be appropriated by the Legislature to the civil legal services fund each year to provide access to civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans with critical legal needs. Increasing the appropriation percentage from 10% to 25% will positively impact Alaska’s most vulnerable populations and ensure that access to justice in Alaska does not depend on how much money you have.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is a nonprofit civil legal aid agency that would benefit from this legislation. ALSC has provided no-cost civil legal assistance to low-income Alaskans for 55 years. Legal assistance is provided statewide to assure Alaskans, especially those at greatest social and economic risk, have access to the civil justice system. For low-income Alaskans, there are few places to seek justice to protect their livelihood, their health, or their family. Without these vital legal services, low-income Alaskans are at increased risk of losing their home, healthcare, access to food, or even the ability to be protected from abuse. Left unresolved, these issues have devastating consequences and impact the overall health and safety of our communities.

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Support for SB 104, Civil Legal Services Fund

Since the original passage of 37.05.590, the community need and demand for legal services has only increased. Demand for help continues to exceed supply, with many Alaskans turned away due to a lack of resources with no other option for affordable legal help. Without sufficient funding to allow full access to necessary legal services, people are subject to unfair treatment and are not able to fully utilize the justice system. SB 104 will be a positive step towards meeting the current need for services.

Thank you for championing this important legislation to improve access to the civil justice system.

Sincerely,



Alex Cleghorn  
Senior Legal and Policy Director  
Alaska Native Justice Center



March 24, 2023

Sent Via Electronic Mail

Senator Matt Claman  
Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee  
State Capitol Room 429  
Juneau, AK 99801  
Senator.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov

**Subject: Support for SB 104, Civil Legal Services Fund**

Dear Senator Claman,

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) I write in support for SB 104, a bill to amend AS 37.05.590 (the statute creating the Civil Legal Services Fund) so that up to 25% of the filing fees paid annually to the Alaska Court System can be appropriated by the Legislature to the civil legal services fund each year to provide access to civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans with critical legal needs. Increasing the appropriation percentage from 10% to 25% will positively impact Alaska's most vulnerable populations and ensure that access to justice in Alaska does not depend on how much money you have.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is a nonprofit civil legal aid agency who would benefit from this legislation. ALSC has provided no cost civil legal assistance to low-income Alaskans for 55 years. Legal assistance is provided statewide to assure Alaskans, especially those at greatest social and economic risk, have access to the civil justice system. For low-income Alaskans, ALSC is often the only place to seek justice to protect their livelihood, their health, or their family. Without these vital legal services, low-income Alaskans are at increased risk of losing their home, healthcare, access to food, or even the ability to be protected from abuse. These unresolved issues have devastating consequences when left unresolved, and impact the overall health and safety of our communities.

Since the original passage of ALSC, the community need and demand for legal services has only increased. Demand for help continues to exceed supply, with many Alaskans turned away due to lack of resources with no other option for affordable legal help. Without sufficient funding to allow full access to necessary services, individuals could be subject to unfair treatment and would not be able to fully utilize the justice system. SB 104 will be a positive step towards meeting the current need for services.

Thank you for championing this important legislation to improve access to the civil justice system, and ensure that the Alaska justice system is fully accessible to all residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benjamin Mallott', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Benjamin Mallott  
Vice President of External Affairs

# ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

Thaddeus Tikiun Jr., Chairperson | Vivian Korthuis, CEO | AVCP.org



## Administration

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March 24, 2023

Senator Forrest Dunbar  
State Capitol Room 125  
Juneau AK, 99801

### **Subject: Support for SB 104, Civil Legal Services Fund**

The Association of Village Council Presidents submits these comments in strong support for SB 104, a bill to amend AS 37.05.590 (the statute creating the Civil Legal Services Fund) so that up to 25% of the filing fees paid annually to the Alaska Court System can be appropriated by the Legislature to the civil legal services fund each year to provide access to civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans with critical legal needs. Increasing the appropriation percentage from 10% to 25% will positively impact Alaska's most vulnerable populations and ensure that access to justice in Alaska does not depend on a person's income.

#### The Association of Village Council Presidents

AVCP is the largest tribal consortium in the Nation, with 56 federally recognized tribes as members. We are headquartered in Bethel, Alaska, which is the hub community of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (YK-Delta) located in southwest Alaska. There are 48 villages in the YK-Delta, which are spread along the Yukon River, Kuskokwim River, and the Bering Sea Coast – an area the size of the State of New York. The population in our region is approximately 27,000 and growing, with a median age of 25. The YK-Delta is “off-the-road system”; travel into our region is by plane or barge, and travel within the region is by small aircraft, boat, snow machine trails, or the ice road. Just this past year, our region was hit by Typhoon Merbok. Our villages are also struggling with food insecurity because of the salmon crisis on the Yukon and the Kuskokwim.

Our tribes' top priorities are public safety; economic development; community wellness; transportation and infrastructure; subsistence, natural resources, and the environment. In supporting our member Tribes and their citizens we often rely on or partner with Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) for vital legal services throughout our region. ALSC's work supports AVCP's priorities by providing legal services to Alaskans throughout our region.

#### Alaska Legal Services Corporation

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is a nonprofit civil legal aid agency that would benefit from this legislation. ALSC has provided no-cost civil legal assistance to low-income Alaskans for 55 years. Legal assistance is provided statewide to assure Alaskans, especially those at greatest social and economic risk, have access to the civil justice system. For low-income Alaskans, ALSC is often the only place to seek justice to protect their livelihood, their health, or their family. Without these vital legal services, low-income Alaskans are at increased risk of losing their home, healthcare, access to food, or even the ability

**Nunaput umyuallgutkut pinirluteng-Ilu, Tegganerput qigcikluki pirpakluki-Ilu, ayagyuaput-Ilu ciuliqagcimaup yuuyarakun.**

**Our Tribes are united and strong, our Elders are respected and valued, and our youth are guided by Yuuyaraq.**

Akiachak, Akiak, Alakanuk, Andreafski, Aniak, Atnautluak, Bethel, Bill Moore's Sl., Chefomak, Chevak, Chuathbaluk, Chuloonawick, Crooked Creek, Eek, Emmonak, Georgetown, Goodnews Bay, Hamilton, Hooper Bay, Lower Kalskag, Upper Kalskag, Kasigluk, Kipnuk, Kongiganak, Kodik, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Lime Village, Marshall, Mekoryuk, Mtn. Village, Napaimute, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Newtok, Nighthute, Nunakauyak, Nunam Iqua, Nunapitchuk, Ohogamiut, Oscarville, Paimiut, Pilot Station, Pitka's Point, Platinum, Quinhagak, Red Devil, Russian Mission, Scammon Bay, Sleetmute, St. Mary's, Stony River, Tuluksak, Tuntutuliak, Tununak, Umkumiut

to be protected from abuse. These unresolved issues have devastating consequences when left unresolved and impact the overall health and safety of our communities.

Tribal citizens dealing with domestic violence, housing issues, benefits issues, or other civil legal matters regularly apply for help with ALSC. If, and too often when, ALSC cannot help them because of limited capacity and overwhelming demand, families in our region are left without any legal assistance. Helping Tribal Citizens through these issues helps prevent homelessness, support children and families, and protect the vulnerable from financial exploitation.

Since the original passage of 37.05.590, the community need and demand for legal services has only increased. Demand for help continues to exceed supply, with many Alaskans turned away due to lack of resources with no other option for affordable legal help. Without sufficient funding to allow full access to necessary services, individuals are too often subject to unfair treatment and are not able to fully use the justice system. SB 104 is a positive step towards assisting vulnerable Alaskans around the state.

### Conclusion

Too often we talk about people as numbers. We count and estimate the number of people who cannot receive legal services. But each of these numbers is a person –a child, a parent, an elder, a fisherman, a business owner, a young adult. A person who is seeking assistance. We see the results from ALSC's assistance in mothers who are legally protected from domestic violence, veterans who get assistance with housing or medical care, or elders who have been victimized by financial fraud, or so many other Tribal Citizens and Alaskans who receive help. When you are considering the impact of this legislation and the passage of SB 104, AVCP urges the legislature to remember that every number is a person that this bill will help.

Thank you for championing this vital legislation for vulnerable Alaskans throughout the state including within our region.

Sincerely,

THE ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE COUNCIL PRESIDENTS



Vivian Korthuis  
Chief Executive Officer

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Sen. Forrest Dunbar](#); [Senate Judiciary](#)  
**Subject:** Support for SB 104  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:15:39 AM

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Dear Senator Dunbar and the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of SB 104, and urging you to move forward with this important proposed legislation. I am a member of the ALSC board of directors, a volunteer and also a past staff member. In particular, I was the staff attorney tasked with re-establishing the Kenai ALSC office back in 2008. I cannot overemphasize the enormous need for civil legal services that exists on the Peninsula, nor the ongoing lack of resources to meet that need. There are so many people who need help with critical issues such as housing, domestic violence, and child custody here. So much of the work ALSC does addresses basic human rights and needs that impact all Alaskans. SB 104 would offer financial support that brings us closer to meeting that need.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Leduc  
[REDACTED]  
Kenai, AK 99611  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Senate Judiciary](#); [Sen. Gary Stevens](#)  
**Subject:** Support for SB 104, Civil Legal Services Fund  
**Date:** Thursday, March 23, 2023 10:07:21 AM

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Good morning (March 23, 2023).

Approving amending AS 37.05.590 to provide 25% of court filing fees be allowed to assist low-income Alaskans with civil legal needs, moves toward improving low-income Alaskans' ability to procure civil legal services.

Of course, no one generally wants to have civil legal issues, but if circumstances warrant, access to professional legal services, regardless of whether or not you have the financial means, is critical to all Alaskans.

Regards, Karen Lambert

Karen L Lambert  
LAMBERT LAW LLC

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Senate Judiciary](#)  
**Cc:** [Sen. Forrest Dunbar](#); [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**Subject:** Support of SB 104  
**Date:** Saturday, March 25, 2023 2:19:35 PM

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Dear Senators Dunbar and Giessel and Senate Judiciary Committee,

I write in support of SB 104 and thank you for your sponsorship of this important legislation. I had the honor of serving on the Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) board of directors for over thirty years, having recently retired. ALSC advocated for the creation of the Civil Legal Services Fund, AS 37.05.590 with the original intent of receiving a modest 25% of court filing fees to help stabilize State funding. My recollection of the reduction to 10% was nothing more than a compromise to get the bill passed. I don't recollect a justification tied to any economic calculation. The intention was to revisit this percentage in the future. It made sense to relate legal aid funding to Court filing fees due to the nature of ALSC's work. Over my 39-year legal career in Alaska, I've seen ALSC constantly balance its combination of private donations, local, State and Federal funding to try and meet the complex legal needs of poverty level Alaskans. Even with ALSC's work, Alaska continues to suffer a "justice gap" where the poorest Alaskans facing serious and life-threatening legal challenges are unable to obtain that "equal justice under law" promised in our Constitution.

ALSC does not do criminal legal work. Instead, ALSC represents Veterans dealing with a broken system of medical care, Alaska's wounded warriors. Victims of domestic violence can get legal advice and representation from ALSC to help protect themselves and their children from one of Alaska's worst scourges. ALSC works to ensure fair housing opportunities are not abused to help prevent homelessness. In rural Alaska, Alaska Native citizens can use technology to contact ALSC lawyers for help. With a hub system of legal aid located in 12 locations across Alaska, ALSC provides face to face services in Native language to meet the constant need for legal aid. Alaska Legal Services lawyer work to avoid people having to go to court to address a dispute about food security, housing needs etc. With a board comprised of both client eligible non-lawyers and public service minded lawyers ALSC implements a five-year strategy to increase service to poverty-level Alaskans.

Finally, you should know that ALSC has been innovative through "[Medical Legal Partnerships](#)" which free health care professionals from spending valuable time doing patient's paperwork for Medicaid and otherwise. Instead, ALSC staff deals with the patient paperwork and other technical needs, while doctors and nurses deal with the medicine. Justice is always best provided at the community level, in my opinion. ALSC is at the forefront in the nation with its "[Community Justice Worker Program](#)" which is changing how legal needs are met in Alaska. ALSC is authorized to establish legal advocates in rural Alaska communities to provide certain legal services with ALSC's training and supervision. I consider my time with ALSC to have been time well spent. The Legislature can rest assured that from the visionary leadership of Nikole Nelson on down through its small but mighty staff, government funding is well spent resulting in \$5 in savings to the State for every dollar spent. I see people who work there making the choice to receive lower pay and benefits than any other legal professionals simply because of their commitments to our community and those in greatest need.

Please support SB 104 and know that your support provides one important solution to Alaska's many needs.

Respectfully,

Gregory Razo  
Anchorage, Alaska