



American Bar Association

Legal Services Corporation Funding

FY2007 Appropriations/Oversight

Efforts by LSC supporters in Congress and around the country, over many years, were instrumental in LSC's receiving the largest funding increase in years (\$22 million), resulting in the highest level since LSC's funding was severely slashed in 1996 to \$278 million. For FY 2007, Congress funded LSC at \$348 million.

Appropriations

The Legal Services Corporation is one of the few government-funded entities allowed to submit its own budget proposal directly to Congress. On February 2, 2006, the bipartisan LSC Board of Directors submitted its [FY 07 budget request](#) (PDF) and urged Congress to provide a significant funding increase for LSC to \$411 million, \$85 million more than the amount provided for FY 06. In making this request, Board Chairman Frank Strickland stated, "LSC recognizes the fiscal constraints facing Congress. However, we hope Congress will conclude that turning away over 50 percent of eligible individuals who need legal assistance is an unacceptable situation." The President on February 6, 2006 transmitted his [FY 07 budget request](#) (PDF) to Congress. The President asked Congress to cut LSC's funding by \$20 million from the FY 06 appropriation of \$330 million, to \$310 million for FY 07. Significantly, the President would cut funding for basic field grants by \$24 million, while proposing increases within LSC's budget for management/administration, Inspector General, and client self-help and technology. The President's request, if enacted, would significantly and [detrimentally impact](#) legal aid funding available to the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories.

The ABA strongly opposes any further cuts to LSC's funding, and supports the LSC Board's request for the \$85 million increase. ABA President Michael S. Greco wrote the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations Committees in support of a funding increase.

In June, the House Appropriations Subcommittee cut LSC's budget to \$313 million. Ranking Member David Obey's (D-WI) amendment in the full Appropriations Committee to restore LSC's funding by \$25 million to \$338 million failed on a generally party-line vote. Representative Obey again offered the amendment on the House floor and the amendment was adopted [237-185](#). Robert D. Evans, Director of the ABA Governmental Affairs Office, [wrote](#) all House members urging them to support the Obey Amendment.

In July, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that funds LSC initially provided funding at FY 2006 level of \$327 million. However, during full committee consideration, LSC's funding was increased to \$358 million as an amendment offered by Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Pete Domenici (R-NM) was agreed to by the Subcommittee leadership. More than [54](#) (PDF) Senators [wrote](#) (PDF) the committee requesting at least \$358 million, including a majority of the Appropriations committee members. Many other Republicans on the Appropriations Committee, including Chair Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Mike DeWine (R-OH) actively supported the increase.

The full Senate was scheduled to consider the bill after the August recess, to be followed by a conference with the House. No further action was taken in either House or Senate, and the 109th Congress however adjourned *sine die* without completing the FY 07 appropriations bills. In the 110th Congress, the new Democratic Appropriations Committee chairs intended to quickly complete the FY 07 process by funding most programs at the FY 06 level, which in LSC's case was \$326.5 million. Because of the detrimental impact of continued funding at the FY 06 level, the ABA Government Affairs Office (GAO), ABA members and state/local bar leaders advocated that LSC should be one of the few programs to receive a funding increase. Ultimately, Congress passed FY 07 Continuing Resolution (CR), which funded LSC at \$348 million, and the President signed the bill into law, [P.L. 110-5](#). This \$22 million increase split the difference between the House and Senate Appropriations Committee-passed amounts, and represents the highest level of funding since LSC was slashed from \$415 million to \$278 million in 1996.

Oversight

The House Judiciary Committee on Commercial and Administrative Law on September 26, 2006 held an oversight hearing regarding LSC management and expense issues ([Hearing Transcript](#)).

LSC Board/Governance

The LSC is governed by an 11-person bipartisan Board of Directors, nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The full [Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions \(HELP\)](#) is responsible for confirming nominees to this Board. The ABA pursuant to longstanding procedures conducts [an evaluation](#) (PDF) of the nominees' qualifications and commitment to the program and submits its views to the Senate.

Since February 2006, the U.S. Senate has confirmed two new members to the LSC Board of Directors: Sarah Singleton of New Mexico and Jonann E. Chiles of Arkansas. Currently five Republicans and five Democrats sit on the 11-member Board. The White House needs to nominate one additional nominee to replace Florentino Subia, who recently passed away. The ABA, pursuant to longstanding procedures, will conduct an evaluation of each nominee's qualifications and commitment to the program and will submit its views to the Senate.

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