

Regional Funding

Fiscal Year 2020 - Partner Funding Application

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services)

Agency Information

General Information

Agency Name	Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services)
Physical Address	500 Lafayette Boulevard, Suite 100, Fredericksburg, VA, 22401, U.S.A.
Mailing Address	500 Lafayette Boulevard, Suite 100, Fredericksburg, VA 22401
Agency Phone Number	(540) 371-1105 x116
Federal Tax ID #	23-7362601
Web Address	www.LegalAidWorks.org
Agency Email Address	akloeckner@LegalAidWorks.org

Agency Mission Statement

We champion fairness by advocating for those with the least access to the civil court system.

Number of Years in Operation	45
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Main Contact

Main Contact	Ann H. Kloeckner, phone: (540) 371-1105 x116, email: akloeckner@LegalAidWorks.org
Job Title	Executive Director

Localities Served

Please select any/all localities your agency serves.

Caroline	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fredericksburg	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
King George	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Spotsylvania	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Stafford	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Collaborative Impact

Describe in detail how the community would be impacted if your agency were dissolved or merged with another partner agency.

Legal Aid Works is the sole agency in PD 16 providing legal help to indigents in the civil justice system. Confused litigants representing themselves would slow the court system as they struggle with the requirements to present their cases, thus slowing the systems for everyone. There is no right to a free lawyer in civil matters, so without Legal Aid Works, these vulnerable clients would be left to figure out a complex system on their own. Without a legal aid agency assisting the most vulnerable in our community, it would be impossible to achieve the standard of equal access to justice for all. If Legal Aid Works merged with another partner agency, no other agency could deliver the critical legal help a law firm like Legal Aid Works could achieve. Other agencies would have to hire attorneys, provide malpractice insurance, state bar membership dues and other costs of running a law office, and would have to consider difficult ethics issues such as the requirement of setting up screenings for conflicts of interest. Legal Aid Works has developed a reservoir of goodwill in the civil justice system over the course of 45 years that would take another agency many years to replicate.

Community Impact

Please provide at least 2 examples of how your services have impacted members of our community.

Example 1

Ana was assaulted by her husband, Arturo, while she was pregnant. He grabbed their 3-year-old girl and threw her violently on their bed. When Ana intervened to protect the child, Arturo grabbed Ana by the neck and pushed her to the floor, leaving many bruises on her body. She barricaded herself in the bathroom and called the police. Legal Aid Works helped her obtain a two-year protective order. At the same time, Ana discovered to her horror that Arturo had been secretly recording Ana's 11-year old daughter from another relationship while the daughter was showering, and then threatened to harm the daughter if she told Ana what was going on. Arturo is now facing criminal charges on that case. Legal Aid Works represented Ana in a custody and support matter against Arturo, and we were able to obtain an order which granted Ana sole legal and physical custody and a statutory minimum amount of \$104 per month was ordered for child support. Ana and her children are no longer living in fear because our office was able to obtain the legal orders that keep her and her children safe. Before our office became involved, Ana was fearful of Arturo, fearful of the legal system, and had no idea what her legal rights or options were.

Example 2

Sarah and Jeffrey had been complaining to their landlord for years about plumbing problems. Even though they submitted five separate work orders to ask for the toilet to be fixed, the landlord claimed he never got notice and therefore, when the toilet clogged and the entire system failed with massive damage to the apartment, he blamed Sarah and Jeffrey for causing the damage. He threatened to kick them out in a month if they did not pay the \$1,000 deductible he had to pay the insurance company when the extensive water damage had to be repaired. Once Sarah and Jeffrey became clients of Legal Aid Works, the landlord changed his request and demanded that they pay \$9,000, the full cost of the repairs, not the \$1,000 insurance deductible. At trial, the landlord's repair company representative testified that he had no idea what specifically caused the clog, so the judge dismissed the eviction complaint because the landlord had failed to prove that the tenants caused or could have prevented the failure of the plumbing system. With the help of a Legal Aid Works attorney, Sarah and Jeffrey avoided having a staggering \$9,000 money judgment placed against them and avoided eviction.

Example 3 (Optional)

Clara has five children with her husband, George. After years of abuse by George, Clara got a two-year protective order against him. Then Legal Aid Works helped Clara in a case against George to determine custody and support. For months, George tried every way he could think of to delay the case, refusing to provide crucial bank statements to show what his true income actually was. Finally, out of delay tactics, he chose to deny that the children were his, and demanded a paternity test, which, predictably, proved that he was indeed the father of all five children. Legal Aid Works attorney poured over the financial records of George, which he was finally court-ordered to produce, and found proof of regular bi-weekly direct deposits of a paycheck from a heretofore unacknowledged second job. With that information brought to light by the Legal Aid Works attorney, Clara received a court order which compels George to pay \$454 per month in spousal support, \$1,536 per month in child support, and \$27,205 in arrearages. Clara is now better able to provide for their children and is living violence-free.

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services)

Agency Budget Narrative

Administrative Expenses

Provide an overview of the administrative costs for your agency.

Administrative costs for the agency as a whole include that portion of salaries, benefits and overhead (postage, equipment maintenance, repair and leasing, computers, copiers, software, printing and reproduction, internet, taxes and licenses, subscriptions and services) allocable to the administrative functions of the organization. Administrative costs associated with the Fredericksburg office, which serves Planning District 16, are estimated at \$116,107, approximately 17% of the total costs for running the Fredericksburg location of the organization. The total funding requested from the local jurisdictions within Planning District 16 is \$96,412. We are not requesting funds for administrative costs. The PD16 funding we receive will go towards attorney salaries, benefits and operating expenses for our Fredericksburg location.

If your agency is requesting an increase or decrease in administrative funding, please describe in detail the reasons for these changes.

N/A

Please provide justification for and specific amounts of administrative costs that are defrayed by locality funds.

N/A

Capital Expenses

Please provide an overview of the capital costs for your agency.

N/A

Please provide justification for and specific amounts of capital costs that are defrayed by locality funds.

N/A

Salary & Benefit Expenses

Please provide an overview of any increases or decreases in general personnel expenses for your agency.

Each year we have seen a steady increase in the cost of our health benefits. In an effort to deal with the ever-increasing costs, Legal Aid Works routinely reviews the employee contribution to those costs. Our Board of Directors formed a salary and benefits committee to look at our very low staff salaries to come up with a plan to increase salaries. They compared average salaries to other Legal Aid offices, the Public Defender, Assistant Attorney General, and Commonwealth's Attorney salaries. By far, our staff salaries were way below the average salary for these comparable public service or government positions. Our Board of Directors approved modest raises in July of 2018 to bring staff up to 20% below the median salary that other legal aid offices and governmental attorneys are being paid in this region.

Please provide a description of any changes to agency benefits structure or cost.

We have not changed the benefits structure. However, we have seen an average increase of 14% in the cost of health insurance benefits from the previous fiscal year.

Budget Issues

Provide any legislative initiatives or issues that may impact the agency for the upcoming year.

Legal Aid Works continues to look for new funding as our existing funding is never guaranteed from year to year. We saw a 50+% cut in our United Way funding FY15 (from \$67,000 to \$32,000). In FY 2018, United Way did return some of that 50% cut (now at \$52,000), but we anticipate that this and other funding sources are going to fluctuate in the coming year. We plan to aggressively seek other funding sources.

If you are aware of “outside” funding sources that will expire or be reduced on a set cycle or date, please note those below and how you are planning for them.

We are not aware of any outside funding sources that will expire or be reduced on a set cycle or date. We assume that all our funding sources are volatile to some degree, and consequently are always looking for new revenue sources.

Please detail any identified agency needs or areas of concern that are currently not being addressed in your funding request.

The continuing need in our office is for more staff attorneys. Since we turn away approximately two out of every three applicants due to our lack of staffing, we are able to meet only a small fraction of the most critical civil legal needs of indigent clients in this area. There is no right to a free attorney in civil legal matters, so that means that when we reject an applicant, there is no alternative which could provide free legal help in civil matters. Our funding request in this application asks for level funding in order to safeguard our current level of staffing, but the overwhelming need in our organization is for more advocates to take on more cases. We serve the PD 16 region (containing fifteen courts) with just 4.8 FTE attorneys.

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services)

Agency Total Budget

In the boxes below provide an overview of the administrative costs associated with your total agency budget.

Expenses

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Budgeted	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2020
Salary	689,535.51	838,521.27	866,891.42	993,348.68	993,348.68
Benefits	192,066.96	234,093.52	205,030.03	249,044.95	249,044.95
Operating Expenses	132,502.32	132,202.80	123,255.81	131,205.00	131,205.00
Capital Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Expenses	148,170.83	75,500.00	56,538.34	80,392.00	80,392.00
Total	1,162,275.6 2	1,280,317.59	1,251,715.6 0	1,453,990.6 3	1,453,990.63

Revenues

Please include revenue associated with your entire organization. This section represents the TOTAL revenue your organization is receiving. The revenue associated with specific programs will be listed within your program budgets; this section represents total revenues. (For example if your organization requests funding for multiple programs the total amount requested from each locality or other entities goes within this section)

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Budgeted	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2020
Caroline	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
Fredericksburg	29,380.00	29,380.00	29,380.00	29,380.00	29,380.00
King George	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Spotsylvania	28,684.00	28,684.00	28,684.00	28,684.00	28,684.00
Stafford	32,445.00	32,445.00	32,445.00	32,445.00	32,445.00
United Way	48,000.00	52,000.00	52,000.00	52,000.00	52,000.00
Grants	934,976.10	1,084,424.6 0	1,109,394.8 5	1,089,042.9 9	1,089,042.99
Client Fees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fundraising	86,867.12	39,300.00	253,872.74	40,600.00	40,600.00
Other (Click to itemize)	28,522.30	13,000.00	21,484.50	180,338.64	180,338.64
Total	1,190,374.5	1,280,733.6	1,528,761.0	1,453,990.6	1,453,990.63

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Budgeted	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2020
	2	0	9	3	

Surplus / Deficit

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Budgeted	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2020
Surplus or Deficit	28,098.90	416.01	277,045.49	0.00	0.00

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services)

Locality Information

Locality Notes

Please use the spaces below to provide any locality specific notes or statements that may be relevant to your application.

Caroline County

Total Caroline County Cases in FY18 – 40

Total People helped – 108 (42) Adults, (56) Children

Lump sum awards \$5,953, monthly awards \$3,849, Annualized (All support orders) \$52,141.

Lump sum avoided \$1,640, monthly avoided \$587, Annualized (All avoided orders) \$8,684. These statistics show the effectiveness of our targeted advocacy to get real results for our clients. In the past year, our legal advocacy allowed our clients to receive \$52,141 and avoid \$8,684 in payments.

City of Fredericksburg

Total City of Fredericksburg Cases in FY18 – 61

Total People helped – 141 (75) Adults, (66) Children

Lump sum awards \$13,963, monthly awards \$2,149, Annualized (All support orders) \$39,751.

Lump sum avoided \$14,614. Annualized (All avoided orders) \$14,614. These statistics show the effectiveness of our targeted advocacy to get real results for our clients. In the past year, our legal advocacy allowed our clients to receive \$39,751 and avoid 14,614 in payments.

King George County

Total King George County Cases in FY18 – 23

Total People helped – 61 (33) Adults, (28) Children

Lump sum awards \$22,780, monthly awards \$925, Annualized (All support orders) \$33,880.

Lump sum avoided \$7,980. Annualized (All avoided orders) \$7,980. These statistics show the effectiveness of our targeted advocacy to get real results for our clients. In the past year, our legal advocacy allowed our clients to receive \$33,880 and avoid \$7,980 in payments.

Spotsylvania County

Total Spotsylvania County Cases in FY18 – 162

Total People helped – 473 (201) Adults, (272) Children

Lump sum awards \$92,010, monthly awards \$9,287, Annualized (All support orders) \$203,454.

Lump sum avoided \$891. Annualized (All avoided orders) \$891. These statistics show the effectiveness of our targeted advocacy to get real results for our clients. In the past year, our legal advocacy allowed our clients to receive \$203,454 and avoid \$891 in payments.

Stafford County

Total Stafford County Cases in FY18 – 168

Total People helped – 498 (212) Adults, (286) Children

Lump sum awards \$27,852, monthly awards \$9,013, Annualized (All support orders) \$136,008.

Lump sum avoided \$20,039, monthly avoided \$350, Annualized (All avoided orders) \$24,239. These statistics show the effectiveness of our targeted advocacy to get real results for our clients. In the past year, our legal advocacy allowed our clients to receive \$136,008 and avoid \$24,239 in payments.

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) - Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) Civil Legal Representation Program

Program Overview

You may save your work at any time by clicking on the "Save My Work" link/icon at the bottom or top of the page.

When you have completed all questions on the form, select the "Save My Work and Mark as Completed" link/icon at the bottom or top of this page.

You may also SWITCH between forms in this application by using the SWITCH FORMS feature in the upper right corner. When switching forms, any updates to the existing form will automatically be saved.

General Information

Program Name	Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) Civil Legal Representation Program
Is this a new program?	No

Program Contact

Name	Ann H. Kloeckner
Title	Executive Director
Email	akloeckner@LegalAidWorks.org
Phone	(540) 371-1105 x116

Program Purpose / Description

Provide an overview of this program

We exist to fill the justice gap, leveling the playing field for those who cannot afford an attorney when they face a civil legal matter, such as obtaining a civil protective order, custody or support; stopping an illegal eviction or foreclosure; or being denied a benefit to which they are entitled. We educate the low-income community about their legal rights in civil matters.

Client Fees

Please describe the fees clients must pay for the services by this program.

Our clients are indigent and do not pay a fee for our services.

Justification of Need

Please state clearly why this service should be provided to the citizens of the region and why the localities should consider this funding request.

We are the only agency that offers these services. When we get a protective order, an enforceable support order or get unemployment benefits for a client, we help stabilize the community. With their rights protected, clients become self-supporting citizens and the PD16 social services system has fewer clients in crisis who use resources. We assist the court system by representing people who could not afford a lawyer. In a difficult economic climate, our efforts have brought in much needed support orders or benefits for your residents. In FY18, we handled 463 cases, helped 1304 PD16 residents, assisting 48 clients in domestic violence cases, & securing the following benefits: \$443,204 in child and spousal support awards; \$441 avoided in collections, \$33,107 avoided in consumer and housing matters; \$18,509 awarded in unemployment payments.

If this is a new program, be sure to include the benefits to the region for funding a new request.

N/A

Target Audience and Service Delivery

Describe the program's intended audience or client base and how those clients are served.

LAW represents people who are under 125% of the Federal poverty guidelines with civil legal matters. According to the 2010 Census, Planning District 16 has 25,829 citizens whose income level makes them eligible for our services. For an average family with one parent and two children, the monthly income limit would be approximately \$2,164. LAW serves all of PD16 (Spotsylvania County, City of Fredericksburg, Caroline County, King George County and Stafford County) from our office in Fredericksburg. In addition, LAW serves all of Planning Districts 9 (Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, Rappahannock Counties) from an office in Culpeper and Planning District 17 (The Counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland) and parts of Planning District 18 (Essex, King & Queen and King William Counties) from our Tappahannock office.

If your program has specific entry or application criteria, please describe it here.

Clients must be under the 125% of the Federal poverty guidelines. We only help those with civil legal matters.

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) - Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) Civil Legal Representation Program

Program Budget Narrative

Please indicate in detail reasons for increases or decreases in the amounts you are requesting.

N/A We are asking for level funding.

If an increase is being requested, please describe the impact not receiving an increase would have on the program.

N/A

In particular, please describe in detail if any increase is sought for new positions or personnel.

N/A

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) - Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) Civil Legal Representation Program

Program Specific Budget

Please provide your program specific budget below.

Expenses

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Budgeted	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2020
Personnel	292,098.39	335,343.06	339,232.98	393,116.28	393,116.28
Benefits	57,946.11	90,463.69	61,680.80	94,144.62	94,144.62
Operating Expenses	73,197.38	75,420.19	74,199.11	79,880.00	79,880.00
Capital Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	423,241.88	501,226.94	475,112.89	567,140.90	567,140.90

Revenues

This section represents revenue specifically associated with your program. Revenue that supports the implementation of your program and the services provided to the community.

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Budgeted	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2020
Caroline	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
Fredericksburg	29,380.00	29,380.00	29,380.00	29,380.00	29,380.00
King George	0.00	0.00	3,000.00	0.00	0.00
Spotsylvania	28,684.00	28,684.00	28,684.00	28,684.00	28,684.00
Stafford	32,445.00	32,445.00	32,445.00	32,445.00	32,445.00
United Way	48,000.00	52,000.00	52,000.00	52,000.00	52,000.00
Grants	281,509.33	352,217.94	322,371.89	417,631.90	417,631.90
Client Fees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fundraising	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other (Click to itemize)	1,723.55	5,000.00	5,732.00	5,500.00	5,500.00
Total	423,241.88	501,226.94	475,112.89	567,140.90	567,140.90

Surplus / Deficit

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Budgeted	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2020
Surplus or Deficit	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) - Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) Civil Legal Representation Program

[View Diagram](#) Goals and Objectives

Goals

Goal:

Provide legal services for victims of domestic violence. We help stabilize & keep the family safe by obtaining protective orders, we also seek child & spousal support. We anticipate the numbers will continue at a high level, due to the stressors tough economic situations create. If the family needs to sort out issues of child custody & visitation, we are able to provide full assistance to the family. Also, we assist the DV victim with other legal matters, such as housing and immigration.

Objectives

		2017 Baseline	2017 Year End	2018 Baseline	2019 Baseline
Provide advice and representation for victims of domestic violence to obtain protective orders against their abusers.	Total # Clients Served	59	48	59	40
	Total # Clients Achieved/Successful	38	23	38	20
	% Achieved / Successful	64.41	47.92	64.41	50
Provide advice and representation for victims of domestic violence to obtain enforceable orders of child and spousal support against their abusive partner.	Total # Clients Served	69	64	69	55
	Total # Clients Achieved/Successful	40	36	40	27
	% Achieved / Successful	57.97	56.25	57.97	49.09

Explanation & Overview

If your outcomes are significantly less than your stated objectives, please note any reasons why this might be the case

Goals & objectives 2018 baseline stated above are for Goals & objectives #2 below Unemployment.

Updates for FY2018

Please note any changes you plan to make to the program, or the stated goals and

objectives, given the data you have reported

No changes are planned.

If you are restating the goals or objectives for the prior calendar year, please include those here

Goal: Provide legal services for victims of domestic violence. We help stabilize & keep the family safe by obtaining protective orders, we also seek child & spousal support. We anticipate the numbers will continue at a high level, due to the stressors tough economic situations create. If the family needs to sort out issues of child custody & visitation, we are able to provide full assistance to the family. Also, we assist the DV victim with other legal matters, such as housing and immigration.

Objective 1: Provide advice and representation for victims of domestic violence to obtain protective orders against their abusers.

Objective 2: Provide advice and representation for victims of domestic violence to obtain enforceable orders of child and spousal support against their abusive partner.

Goal:

Provide legal services for indigent clients who were wrongly denied unemployment benefits. In the recent difficult economic situation, unemployment benefits cases are vitally important to struggling individuals. We are hoping to take a similar number of cases in this area in the following fiscal year, in order to assist at-risk residents of Planning District 16 who have lost their jobs.

Objectives		2017 Baseline	2017 Year End	2018 Baseline	2019 Baseline
Provide advice and representation for those who were wrongly denied unemployment benefits.	Total # Clients Served	13	9	13	8
	Total # Clients Achieved/Successful	4	5	4	4
	% Achieved / Successful	30.77	55.56	30.77	50
Provide advice and representation for indigent clients to obtain back awards and monthly continuing awards of unemployment benefits that were wrongfully denied to them.	Total # Clients Served	13	9	13	8
	Total # Clients Achieved/Successful	6	4	6	4
	% Achieved / Successful	46.15	44.44	46.15	50

Explanation & Overview

If your outcomes are significantly less than your stated objectives, please note any reasons why this might be the case

Goals & objectives 2018 baseline stated above are for Goals & objectives #1 victims of domestic violence to obtain protective orders and support orders.

Updates for FY2018

Please note any changes you plan to make to the program, or the stated goals and objectives, given the data you have reported

No changes are planned.

If you are restating the goals or objectives for the prior calendar year, please include those here

Goal: Provide legal services for indigent clients who were wrongly denied unemployment benefits. In the recent difficult economic situation, unemployment benefits cases are vitally important to struggling individuals. We are hoping to take a similar number of cases in this area in the following fiscal year, in order to assist at-risk residents of Planning District 16 who have lost their jobs.

Objective 1: Provide advice and representation for those who were wrongly denied unemployment benefits.

Objective 2: Provide advice and representation for indigent clients to obtain back awards and monthly continuing awards of unemployment benefits that were wrongfully denied to them.

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) - Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) Civil Legal Representation Program

Number of Individuals Served

Localities

Please provide the actual numbers of individuals served in this program during FY2017 and FY2018, the estimated numbers of individuals served in FY2019 and the projected numbers of individuals served in FY2020.

Locality	FY2017 (Actual)	FY2018 (Actual)	FY 2019 Estimate	FY 2020 Projected
Fredericksburg City	161	141	120	120
Caroline County	136	108	100	100
King George County	80	61	50	50
Spotsylvania County	474	473	430	430
Stafford County	354	498	400	400
Other Localities	110	23	20	20
Total	1,315	1,304	1,120	1,120

Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) - Legal Aid Works (Formerly Rappahannock Legal Services) Civil Legal Representation Program

Collaborative Impact

Efforts and Partnerships

Describe in detail examples of collaborative efforts and key partnerships between your program and the other programs or agencies in the area.

LAW collaborates through active key partnerships with several agencies. Our key partnerships include working with EmpowerHouse (representing some of their clients in need of protective orders and training their shelter staff on legal rights); RCASA (advising their rape crisis clients on family law and immigration matters); Thurman Brisben Center (regular talks to their residents on tenants' legal rights); Micah Ministries (advising their staff on tenants' legal rights, accepting many referrals from their programs); active participant in Council of Executives, a group of nonprofit leaders which shares best practices in nonprofit governance; active participant in Rappahannock Area Domestic Violence Task Force (area law enforcement, Commonwealth's Attorney and nonprofit groups that work with victims of domestic violence). We also have assigned a paralegal to conduct intake and community education at Empowerhouse every month.

Collaborative Impact

Describe in detail how the community would be impacted if your program were dissolved or merged with another partner agency.

LAW is the sole agency in PD 16 giving legal help to indigents in the civil justice system. Confused litigants representing themselves slow the court system as they struggle with presenting their cases, thus slowing the system for everyone. There is no right to a free lawyer in civil matters, so without LAW, these vulnerable clients would have to figure out a complex system on their own. Without Legal Aid helping the most vulnerable in our region, it would be impossible to achieve the standard of equal access to justice for all. If LAW merged with another partner agency, no other agency could deliver the critical legal help a law firm like LAW could achieve. Other agencies would have to hire lawyers, provide malpractice insurance, state bar member dues and other costs of running a law office, and would have to consider difficult ethics issues such as the requirement of setting up screenings for conflicts of interest. If we dissolved, other nonprofits would lose an irreplaceable ally.