

Resolution 2024-1: Civil Legal Services Fund

WHEREAS, access to justice should not depend on how much money you have; and

WHEREAS, civil legal aid ensures fairness for all in the justice system by providing access to legal help for people who cannot otherwise afford it, to protect their livelihood, health, home, or family; and

WHEREAS, 1 in 6 Alaskans – 128,850 individuals – live below 125% of the federal poverty ceiling for whom access to the civil justice system is possible only with the help of Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC); and

WHEREAS, Alaska has a “justice gap,” which is the difference between the level of legal assistance available and the level that is necessary to meet the needs of low-income individuals; and

WHEREAS, since 1984, the number of Alaskans eligible for free legal services has more than doubled, from 41,000 to over 128,850, yet the state’s contribution to ALSC is only a fraction of what it was 30 years ago; and

WHEREAS, ALSC must turn away one eligible family for each one they can assist due to a lack of funding; and

WHEREAS, by amending AS 37.05.590 so that 25% of Court system filing fees can be appropriated into the Civil Legal Services Fund instead of the current 10%, additional revenue will be generated to address justice gap; and

WHEREAS, as followers of Christ, we are called to live by the greatest commandment: to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-39); and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s (ELCA) 1999 social statement Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All commits the church to “address creatively and courageously the complex causes of poverty” as well as calls for “scrutiny of how specific policies and practices affect people and nations that are the poorest, and changes to make policies of economic growth, trade, and investment more beneficial to those who are poor;” therefore, be it ...

RESOLVED, that the Alaska Synod of the ELCA, in Assembly, memorialize the 2024 Alaska Synod assembly urging the Alaska State Legislature, in the 2024 legislative session, to pass legislation to increase civil legal services funding from 10% to 25% of court filing fees; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Alaska Synod of the ELCA, in Assembly, encourage member congregations of the Alaska Synod to contact Alaska State legislators directly through letters, emails, telephone calls and in-person visits, urging them to pass legislation, in the 2024 legislative session, to increase civil legal services funding from 10% to 25% of court filing fees.

Contact:

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