

counterproductive to that goal. In 1997 Northwest Louisiana Legal Services argued for preserving a woman's parental rights to her children, despite clear evidence she had physically abused them. The case began in 1991. The State investigated it. They assumed temporary custody. Legal Services still got involved, claiming that terminating parental rights was improper. These children had been severely beaten and burned, and yet our taxpayer dollars went through Legal Services to defend this type of individual.

Providing free legal services to the poor is perfectly appropriate for local and State entities to carry out. I think we will not end the abuses as long as the remote Federal Government continues to fund a program of this sort.

Obviously these organizations have no interest in respecting the intent of Congress, when we have cited repeated violations of the very restrictions that were already in the law that continue to happen. This is not the job of the United States government. It is the job of the State governments or of local bar societies.

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Chairman, I join my colleagues from Pennsylvania and West Virginia in sponsoring this amendment to prevent the drastic 50% cut in Legal Service Corporation funding.

Without adequate funding for Legal Services, our poorest, most vulnerable citizens will be unable to have legal representation in civil matters.

"Equal Justice Under Law," which Americans read every day across the street on the Supreme Court building, will be empty words.

This proposed 50% cut, to \$141 million, follows a 33% reduction in FY 1996, and no increases in FY 1997 or FY 1998. This amendment would be a great improvement from the current level in the bill, but it still represents a \$33 million cut from last year's appropriation.

In my home state, severe cuts in LSC funds have ready meant that tens of thousands of Minnesotans who needed legal help had to be turned away. Because of reduced funding, Legal Services in Minnesota closes 4,000 fewer cases each year.

Legal services in my state is struggling in spite of generous support from state and private sources. In Minnesota, over 3,000 attorneys already donated over 30,000 hours of legal services—worth over \$3.5 million—each year. Minnesota lawyers pay an extra \$50 in their annual licensing fee to support legal services. Individual lawyers and firms currently contribute over \$500,000 each year.

Even greater numbers of poor people have been shut out of the civil justice system in other states, where private support is not as strong: LSC programs across the nation are already serving 300,000 fewer low-income Americans because of decreased resources. If limited to this bill's drastic level they will have to turn away an additional 400,000 vulnerable Americans.

On top of this, a recent Supreme Court decision is further threatening resources for legal aid to the poor. In 1997 Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) programs accounted for 11% of funding for LSC programs. But, now, the availability of IOLTA funding for legal aid programs has been called into question by the courts.

Some claim that private bar can step in and meet the legal needs of the poor if funding for the LSC is cut by this magnitude. But through-

out the country the private bar and individual lawyers are already working hard to provide legal services for indigent people.

However, they cannot meet these critical needs alone, any more than doctors can treat all the medical needs of the poor or grocers can feed all the hungry without pay.

We cannot effectively provide legal services to the poor without a public-private partnership. LSC funds are critical in matching private lawyers with needy clients, and LSC-funded staff is needed to handle intake, screening, referral, training and support for private lawyers.

Although government entities are not often known for efficiency, ninety-seven cents of every LSC dollar go directly to delivery of legal assistance. And federal oversight and accountability over those dollars are ensured.

Tight restrictions required by Congress are being enforced by LSC under the strong leadership of President John McKay: no class action suits; no lobbying; no legal assistance to illegal aliens; no political activities; no prisoner litigation; no redistricting representation; and no representation of people evicted from public housing due to drugs.

Some of my colleagues point to a few, well-publicized cases that appear to be abusive. There is almost always more to the story, and in many cases no LSC-funded program was involved or the LSC is enforcing sanctions against the abuses. But even if all of the alleged abuses were true, these would represent a mere handful of aberrations in a program that last year served 2 million clients, benefiting 4 million Americans, most of whom were low-income seniors, women and children. I wish all federal programs could have such a remarkable record.

Legal Services actually saves taxpayers money by establishing child support orders and maintaining private health insurance for children. Legal Services protects the victims of domestic violence and child abuse. Legal Services combats consumer fraud and unlawful discrimination.

If our justice system is only accessible to the wealthy—to those with means—then it cannot truly be just. I urge my colleagues to support basic fairness and equality under the law by restoring Legal Services funding.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MULLOY).

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ROGERS. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 508, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MULLOY) will be postponed.

Mr. ROGERS. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS) having assumed the chair, Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4276) making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the

Judiciary, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR SUPPORT ON SHAYS-MEEHAN LEGISLATION, AND URGING MEMBERS TO VOTE TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE POOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FOX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight first to thank the House for their support for the important Shays-Meehan legislation. This legislation is a landmark in that it will provide for the first time in many, many years an opportunity for the House to have meaningful campaign finance reform.

The bill makes four major changes to our campaign finance system.

One, it completely eliminates Federal soft money as well as State soft money that influences the Federal elections.

Two, it strengthens the definition of "express advocacy" to include those radio and TV advertisements that clearly identify a Federal candidate which are run within 60 days of an election, or include unambiguous support for or opposition to a clearly identified Federal candidate run at any time.

Number three, Mr. Speaker, it improves the Federal Election Commission disclosure and enforcement. It requires the Federal Election Commission reports to be filed electronically. It provides for Internet posting of this and other disclosure data.

Number four, it establishes a commission to study further reforms to our campaign finance system.

In addition, the bill makes other important reforms, including foreign money and fund-raising on government property being prohibited. It expands the ban on unsolicited franked mass mailings. It also makes other reforms which, in the opinion of those who have been observing the House for many years, go to the important end game of