



October 29, 2015

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

As Attorneys General of Washington, Justice For All is a fundamental principle we have fought to protect.

We know you agree that it is critically important for everyone in Washington State to have fair and equal access to our justice system, regardless of a person's ability to afford a lawyer.

The new 2015 Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study Update, released today, portrays a troubling Justice Gap in our state. You will be deeply disturbed to see that some of the most economically vulnerable individuals and families in our state do not have that access to justice. In fact, nearly 500,000 of our neighbors who live in poverty suffer because they are unable to find help with their civil legal problems.

Most alarming, the report documents that the problem is getting worse.

Seven in ten low-income Washington households experience at least one civil legal problem each year with most facing many more. Based on a statewide survey of more than 1,600 low-income respondents, the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study finds the average number of civil legal problems facing low-income Washington residents has tripled from 2003 to today.

While the need is great and the problem is growing, sources of help are scarce. More than three-quarters of low-income residents experiencing a civil legal problem will find no help to solve it. They will be left to confront their civil legal problems alone.

These are significant problems that affect everyday lives – a veteran's access to affordable health care, a struggling family's ability to avoid bankruptcy, or a worker's right to fair treatment on the job.

In our state, the total number of state-funded attorneys serving low-income individuals and families is less than half the minimal level defined by Congress of one attorney for every 5,000 eligible low-income residents.

It's no wonder that many of those who gave their time to answer the survey offered additional comments questioning whether there was any hope for help. One respondent asked, "Will people in my position, or worse off than I, get any sort of meaningful help?" The answer to this question must be yes! Washington State can and must do better.

The responsibility lies with all of us. By building awareness of legal aid among low-income communities, expanding the use of innovative self-help tools, and increasing the number of civil legal aid attorneys in our state we can come closer to providing fairness and Justice For All.

Please review the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Update attached to this email to learn more about the legal challenges confronting Washingtonians. Then, please join us in supporting civil legal services for those who need it most.

There can be no real justice in our state until there is Justice For All.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Ferguson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

BOB FERGUSON  
Attorney General

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob McKenna". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letters of each name being larger and more prominent.

ROB MCKENNA  
Attorney General (2005-2012)