

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR NOVEMBER 23, 2015

Lawyers can help get 'justice for all'

Kris Goddard, Olympia

Your recent editorial about the Washington Supreme Court's study touched my heart. It highlighted the "huge unmet need for civil legal assistance for low-income people."

In criminal cases, the accused are constitutionally guaranteed a lawyer if they cannot afford one. Those charged with civil offenses are - or believe they are - on their own. Three-quarters of people on the edge of poverty deal with the legal system on their own or must pay lawyers. This is bound to move struggling citizens with their existing myriad challenges from bad to worse.

In spite of the recent state budget increases for funding civil legal aid, the cited Supreme Court study concludes that it would take an additional 124 lawyers to provide civil legal assistance for all eligible lower-income citizens of this state.

Washington will again begin its legislative session with a significant budget shortfall. Might I suggest that some of our states' highest-earning legal firms step up and form a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation specifically designed to supplement the gap for civil legal

assistance funding?

It could prevent untenable financial hardship for defendants and change people's lives for the better. It would help fulfill the American promise of equal justice for all.

KRIS GODDARD, OLYMPIA



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