JUST THE FACTS ON THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGAL AID NETWORK

Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN) is the network of civil legal aid programs, providing representation to low income Pennsylvanians in legal problems, for which they have nowhere else to turn.

- PLAN programs represent 100,000+ clients yearly in urgent legal problems, 54% of whom live in rural areas.
- Every county in the state is served by a legal aid program. Six specialized programs target special needs.
- In these difficult economic times, the need for legal aid has skyrocketed. Because of the recession, many more Pennsylvanians are eligible for representation:
  - Legal aid helps nearly 10,000 clients every year, who are faced with mortgage foreclosures.
  - Legal aid represents about 12,000 domestic violence clients annually.
- So far this fiscal year, staff of PLAN programs has been cut by 10% from last year.
- A study called “Documenting the Justice Gap” found that for each person represented by legal aid, another eligible person, in immediate need of services and asking for help, is turned away due to lack of resources.
- The Governor’s budget for FY 2011-12 was $3.009 million in state funds, the level appropriated last year (less a mid-year $30,000 freeze) and $5.049 million in federal SSBG funding, the current level. The final appropriation was $2.735 million, a cut of 10% from the prior year’s appropriation. We ask the Governor renew his request in 2012-13 for the same amount he requested last year: $3.009 million in state funds and $5.049 in federal funds.
- The state appropriation to legal services has declined the past four fiscal years, due to a $100,000 freeze in 2008, a $31,000 freeze in 2009, a $30,000 freeze in 2010 and an appropriation cut this year. State funding for legal aid today remains very close to the amount appropriated in 1976, as portrayed in the following graph.

In the current fiscal year, legal aid received $9M less in Interest on Lawyers Trust Account ("IOLTA") revenues than three years ago; the result of low interest rates.

A $2 filing fee from Act 122 of 2002 is helping offset IOLTA losses and stagnant state funding. This Act, which provides vital support for legal aid, is to sunset in October 2012.

Federal stimulus funding has helped PLAN programs meet some immediate needs and offset the IOLTA cuts. Stimulus funding was over $3 million last year and has now virtually come to an end.

KEY POINTS ON ECONOMIZING BY THE PLAN NETWORK:
- Despite decreased funding, legal aid programs have maintained services through federal stimulus funds, which are now ending, filing fees (scheduled to end next year), and cost savings by staff furloughs, suspension of pensions, increased staff contributions to health insurance, and salary freezes.
- Due to the loss of stimulus funding and reductions in state, federal and IOLTA funding, programs have reduced staff by 10% this fiscal year. The level of services provided in FY 2010-12 cannot be maintained. Twenty-two years ago, PLAN could support 358 legal aid lawyers. Today, despite increased need, PLAN can support 277 lawyers, due to flat funding and the effects of increased costs, evidenced in the graph above.