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**ILLINOIS EQUAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION AWARDS GRANTS TO 17 ORGANIZATIONS  
PROVIDING CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES TO LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS STATEWIDE**

***IEJF Funding Critical as Federal Support for Legal Aid is Slashed***

(CHICAGO).....The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (IEJF) announced today that it has awarded over \$1.66 million in grants to 17 not-for-profit organizations that provide legal representation, information and advice to low-income residents facing critical legal challenges throughout the state. The grants range in scope from funding for web-based legal information resources and telephone advice hotlines to mediation and full-scale litigation. The IEJF also supports legal aid programs that partner with county courthouses, public libraries and community-based social service organizations to offer help where and when people need it, and to develop solutions to life problems, not just legal problems.

“Our mission is to support programs that empower people to resolve their legal issues and regain control of their lives,” said Karen Hasara, president of the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation. “The recent 15% reduction in federal funding to the Legal Services Corporation has already led to attorney layoffs at some of the largest legal aid providers in Illinois. These cuts have meant that there are now even less services available for many of our state’s most vulnerable residents, including homeless children, seniors, people with disabilities, and domestic violence victims. State funding is providing a critical lifeline to many at this time of widespread need.”

State funding for civil legal aid is appropriated through the Illinois Equal Justice Act and passed through the budget of the Attorney General. The Act, approved by the General Assembly and signed into law in 1999, recognizes the State’s responsibility to ensure equal access to the legal system. The Act also created the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation to distribute the State’s appropriation for civil legal aid to not-for-profit organizations throughout the state. The appropriation was \$3.5 million from 2007 to 2009, but was slashed 50% to \$1.75 million in 2010 and has remained at this level. Of the ten most populous states, Illinois ranks last in what it spends on critical civil legal aid services. The average spent among the ten most populous states is \$10.2 million.

The IEJF added two new grants this year. The Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services received a \$10,000 grant for its legal information center and advice desk at the Markham Courthouse in underserved south suburban Cook County and \$5,000 was awarded to the Latino Union to support the Just Pay for All Coalition’s statewide education campaign to inform low wage workers of recent amendments to the Illinois Wage Payment & Collections Act.

To learn more about the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, visit [www.iejf.org](http://www.iejf.org). To learn more about the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign, a bi-partisan effort to increase the state appropriation for civil legal services for the poor, visit [www.equaljusticeillinois.org](http://www.equaljusticeillinois.org).

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