

# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

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Executive Director

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2008

### DISTRICT GOVERNMENT ALLOCATES \$3.6 MILLION FOR CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES IN FISCAL YEAR 2009 BUDGET

The D.C. Council finalized legislation for the fiscal year (FY) 2009 budget today, which allocates \$3.6 million for civil legal services. The funding was included at the request of the D.C. Access to Justice Commission, and marks the third straight year in which the Commission's advocacy led to District funding of civil legal services. The funding, which is a \$400,000 increase over FY 2007 and FY 2008, will support legal services in underserved areas of the city, provide legal assistance for underserved groups; permit more attorneys to work on housing-related matters; continue funding a shared legal interpreter bank to assist limited English proficient residents, and pay for the Poverty Lawyers Loan Repayment Assistance Act of 2006.

"We are extremely grateful to both the Mayor and the City Council for their strong support of civil legal services," said Commission Chair Peter Edelman. "The funds the District government has allocated for FY 2009 will continue the innovative programs that are occurring across the city to provide residents in need access to legal representation, and it will allow the loan repayment program to meet growing needs."

As a result of the funding that began in FY 2007, the number of poverty lawyers working east of the Anacostia River more than doubled and there are several more lawyers stationed in Landlord/Tenant Court to provide unrepresented parties with same day legal advice and representation. For further information about the public funding recipients in FY 2007 and 2008, please visit, [www.dcbarfoundation.org](http://www.dcbarfoundation.org).

The D.C. Court of Appeals created the Commission in 2005 for a three-year term to address the scarcity of civil legal services available to low and moderate income District residents and to break down barriers preventing equal access to justice. The Commission is comprised of judges, legal services providers, D.C. Bar and D.C. Bar Foundation representatives, and other community leaders. As a result of the Commission's first-term success, the Court of Appeals authorized the Commission in October 2007 to continue its

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work without a fixed termination date. For further information about the Commission, please contact its Executive Director, Sunil H. Mansukhani. He can be reached at 202-344-4441 or [info@dcaccesstojustice.org](mailto:info@dcaccesstojustice.org). You may also wish to visit [www.dcaccesstojustice.org](http://www.dcaccesstojustice.org).