

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

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D.C. ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION SECURES \$3.2 MILLION FOR CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FOR DISTRICT RESIDENTS

Low-income District of Columbia residents and others who face barriers entering and navigating the civil justice system will benefit enormously from \$3.2 million in funding that the District government made available for civil legal services in the fiscal year that began on October 1, 2006. The City Council voted the appropriation in response to a recommendation by the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission. The Commission was created by the D.C. Court of Appeals in 2005 to address low and moderate income residents' unmet need for civil legal services. It includes D.C. Court of Appeals and Superior Court Judges, past Presidents of the D.C. Bar, Executive Directors of three leading legal services providers, and other community leaders.

The funding, which will be distributed by the D.C. Bar Foundation, will provide for more legal services in housing-related matters, make legal services available in underserved areas of the District, and create a shared legal interpreter bank so that residents who are not proficient in English can communicate with their lawyer and understand the judicial process. A portion of the appropriation will be used to support the District of Columbia Poverty Lawyer Loan Repayment Program Act of 2006, which was also recently passed by the City Council.

“By providing this funding, the District government has recognized the vital role of civil legal services in helping vulnerable District residents to solve problems that have a tremendous impact on their daily lives,” stated Commission Chair Peter Edelman. “With poverty on the rise in the District, however, much remains to be done. The Commission will continue its collaborative efforts with the District government and organizations throughout the City to ensure that all residents have equal access to justice.”

For further information about the Commission, please contact its Executive Director, Sunil Mansukhani, at 202-344-4441 or Sunil.Mansukhani@dcaccesstojustice.org.