



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of  
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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February 19, 2015

Senator Lesil McGuire  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 121  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

**Subject: Support for SB 49, Civil Legal Services Fund**

Dear Senator McGuire:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support for SB 49, a bill authored by you to establish a mechanism to enhance funding for organizations that provide civil legal services to low-income individuals, veterans and older Alaskans by allowing the Legislature to appropriate up to 25% of filing fees paid annually to the Alaska Court System.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC), a nonprofit civil legal aid agency that has provided no-cost civil legal help to low-income Alaskans for over 45 years, is an example of an organization that would benefit from this legislation. ALSC is the sole statewide agency that provides free civil legal assistance to low-income seniors, veterans, and other Alaskans who are eligible for their services.

Legal assistance for seniors is provided statewide by ALSC and assures that seniors, especially those at greatest social and economic risk, have access to the civil justice system. Last year, Alaska Legal Services provided direct legal aid to more than 850 seniors. ALSC helps seniors establish Miller Trusts, guardianships, conservatorships, advance directives and wills; prevent seniors from losing their housing related to predatory lending practices, illegal foreclosure or eviction, and renter-landlord disputes; assist, foreclosures, and reverse mortgages; obtain and maintain Social Security benefits; among other forms of legal assistance. Alaska Legal Services employs approximately twenty attorneys statewide.

The ACoA supports SB 49 to improve access to civil legal representation for Alaska's most needy population, including Alaskan seniors and veterans. Access to legal information, advice, and assistance helps older Alaskans preserve financial and personal independence, maintain control of their finance and health care decisions, maintain appropriate family relationships, and protect personal assets and well-being. Thank you for sponsoring this important legislation. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director, by phone (465-4879) or email ([denise.daniello@alaska.gov](mailto:denise.daniello@alaska.gov)) should you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Shields  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director