

# ACCESS to JUSTICE in Texas



## All Texans deserve fair and equitable access to our justice system.

Civil legal aid assures fairness for all in the court system, regardless of income. Approximately 5.6 million Texans qualify for legal aid, the second-highest number in the nation.

Legal aid provides access to legal help for people to protect their livelihoods, their health and their families.

Many need help with critical civil legal issues impacting their very existence, including:

Spouses and children of domestic abuse

Elderly Texans wrongly denied life-sustaining prescriptions

Veterans denied critical medical care, disability and other benefits

Families who have lost their homes

Legal aid organizations help more than 104,000 Texas families each year. Due to a lack of resources, only about 20 percent of the civil legal needs of eligible Texans are being met. Others continue to suffer or unsuccessfully attempt to represent themselves in our complicated court system.

## A funding crisis for Texas legal aid continues.

Since 2007, the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, which is the primary state-based funder of legal aid in Texas, has experienced a loss of \$99 million due to declines in funding from the state's Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program.

Texas ranks 50th in access to legal aid lawyers. There is approximately only one legal aid lawyer for every 11,000 Texans who qualify. Due to declines in funding, Texas legal aid providers have been forced to lay off staff and cut services, resulting in thousands of Texans being denied critical, life-changing legal representation.



**“A society that denies access to the courts for the least among us denigrates the law for us all.”**

— Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht and former Chief Justice Wallace B. Jefferson

## The Texas Supreme Court, Texas Legislature and Texas lawyers have worked hard to increase access to the courts.

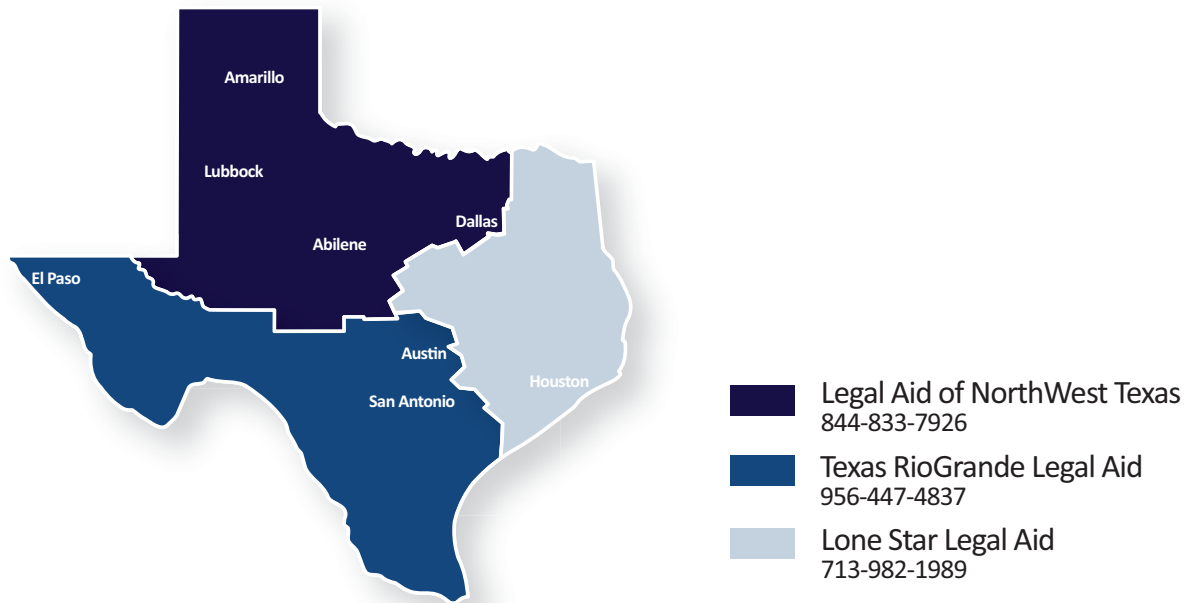
Through a tremendous show of bipartisan support and the outstanding efforts of the Supreme Court of Texas, the 83rd Texas Legislature appropriated \$17.6 million for civil legal aid for the biennium.

In addition, the "Chief Justice Jack Pope Act," will increase funds dedicated to legal aid for indigent Texans from civil penalties and civil restitution recovered by the Texas Attorney General. We need the Texas Legislature's help again in 2015.

Texas lawyers provide over 2.3 million hours in free or indirect legal services to the poor, valued at approximately \$500 million annually, according to the 2013 State Bar of Texas Pro Bono Survey. Additionally, attorneys have given millions of dollars in private donations.



## Yet, most Texans still go without the civil legal help they need.



**Please support justice for all through an adequately funded legal aid system in Texas.**



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