

September 17, 2013

Re: Support Critical Resources for the Federal Judiciary

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned 27 organizations represent a diverse array of nonpartisan groups that care deeply about civil and human rights, which are threatened by the current lack of resources provided to the federal courts. As Congress returns to the task of considering the budget for Fiscal Year 2014, we call your attention to the need for adequate funding for the federal judiciary.

Sequestration has translated into a cut of roughly 5% in appropriations for the federal judiciary. According to the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, sequestration has meant budget cuts of \$350 million for the federal courts. Some segments of our federal judiciary, such as the Federal Defender system, seem to have suffered disproportionately.¹ These cuts threaten to erode several core constitutional values, including the right to a jury trial and due process, and threaten to make illusory key statutory rights, such as the right to a speedy trial.

In a year when this nation marks the 50th anniversary of both *Gideon v. Wainwright* and the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, we are reminded of the role that courts have played, and can continue to play, in the struggle for equality and justice. However, the courts cannot play this role if they lack the necessary resources. Whether it be addressing the judicial vacancy crisis, acting on the nonpartisan Judicial Conference's recommendations to increase the number of authorized federal judgeships, or passing a budget that provides desperately needed funding to our nation's federal courts, we ask for your help to protect this critical branch of government. We make this request not for the judiciary, but for its ultimate beneficiaries --- the people who depend upon it for the protection of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If the members of your staff have any questions or want any additional information on this matter, please contact Praveen Fernandes, Justice at Stake's Director of Federal Affairs & Diversity Initiatives, at pfernandes@justiceatstake.org.

Respectfully,

¹ It has been reported that the national network of public defenders has been cut by 8 percent, and the remaining public defenders have faced furloughs of up to 20 unpaid days. Editorial, *Justice Sequestered*, N.Y. TIMES, July 20, 2013.

American Association of University Women
American Constitution Society for Law & Policy
Alliance for Justice
Asian Americans Advancing Justice—AAJC
The Constitution Project
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Earthjustice
Human Rights Campaign
Justice at Stake
Lambda Legal
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Bar Association
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Lawyers Association (NELA)
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Native American Bar Association
National Organization for Women
National Women's Law Center
Native American Rights Fund
People for the American Way Foundation