

Statutory Restrictions on LSC-funded Programs

The Legal Services Corporation Act (42 U.S.C. § 2996 *et seq.*) stipulates that LSC-funded programs cannot use either LSC or private funds for certain activities. The 1996 Appropriations Act (Pub. L. 104-134) and subsequent legislation introduced new restrictions that apply to funds from all sources—federal, state, local, and private—except tribal funds.

The LSC Act prohibits participation in:

- Political activities, including voter assistance or voter registration.
- Criminal cases, except for minor offenses in Indian tribal courts.
- *Habeas corpus* actions challenging criminal convictions against officers of the court or law enforcement officers.
- Organizing activities, including training for—or encouraging of—political or labor activities.
- Proceedings or litigation to procure non-therapeutic abortions or compel the provision of abortion services over religious or moral objections.
- Proceedings involving desegregation of public schools, military service or assisted suicide.

In 1996, Congress prohibited additional activities, including:

- Lobbying government offices, agencies or legislative bodies except for limited situations.
- Representing people who are not U.S. citizens with limited exceptions such as lawful permanent residents, H2A agricultural workers, H2B forestry workers, and victims of battering, extreme cruelty, sexual assault or trafficking.
- Class actions.
- Claiming, collecting or retaining attorneys' fees.
- Soliciting clients in-person.
- Abortion-related litigation of any kind.
- Representing prisoners.
- Representing people who are being evicted from public housing because they face criminal charges of selling or distributing illegal drugs.
- Most activities involving welfare reform.
- Redistricting activities.
- Influencing the time or manner of census-taking.