



2018 Annual Report
Another Successful Year Serving Low-income Georgians

*“GLSP’s help meant having an opportunity
to have my voice heard.”*

– A.S.

Georgia Legal Services Program®

“This case is a great example of the dire needs of persons in poverty to obtain legal representation and access to our justice system to correct the wrongs against them. This case also serves as a reminder that people in poverty are often ignored and their voices not heard, resulting in hardships that persist without the help of a lawyer.”

**– Cedric West,
Eviction Prevention
Project Attorney**

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Ms. Smith and her four-year-old grandson were living in an apartment infested with vermin. She laid traps and also called property management. The company performed patchwork measures, including laying sticky tarp down, which did not resolve the problem. Ms. Smith requested the property manager relocate her to another apartment free of vermin and compensate her for the items and food that were destroyed by the vermin, but her request was declined.

Ms. Smith became aware of GLSP after attending one of the Program’s circuit riding events. Attorney Cedric West, who specializes in handling housing cases, contacted the onsite property management and obtained only promises and no solutions to resolve Ms. Smith’s vermin problem. West sent a demand letter to the property management company, which was located in another state. The letter demanded that Ms. Smith be immediately moved to a vermin-free apartment at the company’s expense, or that her current apartment be thoroughly exterminated by a professional extermination company specializing in vermin infestations. Within two weeks, Ms. Smith and her grandson were moved to a newly renovated apartment with brand new appliances, and Ms. Smith received a \$750 check from the property management company in the full amount requested to compensate her for the value of the items that were damaged from the vermin. Ms. Smith and her grandson sleep better at night knowing they are in a safe and sanitary apartment.

The Georgia Legal Services Program® is a nonprofit law firm whose mission is to provide civil legal services for persons with low incomes, creating equal access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. GLSP was founded by members from the former Younger Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Georgia in 1971.

Client stories featured in this 2018 Annual Report are based on actual case facts from client files, though any photographs and names of clients featured in the Report do not represent the actual clients.

Dear Friends,

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously stated, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is ‘What are you doing for others?’” He challenged each of us to serve our communities, create positive change, and uplift each other. As I look back over 2018, I am filled with gratitude for you. You heeded Dr. King’s call by being the justice champion that rural Georgians with low incomes need. Because you care so deeply, the Georgia Legal Services Program is able to change and save lives.

As you read our [2018 Annual Report](#), I invite you to consider just how important your support is to the work that we do. You are helping real people facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles to living safe and stable lives. Our client, Mr. Woods, whom you will read about in this Report, is alive because you made our advocacy on his behalf possible. Ms. Williams and her son are safe because you provided the resources we needed to fight for them. In 2018, we served an estimated 122,690 low-income Georgians. The stories of the many lives improved because of your support are too numerous to list. But, each story is one of a critical need met, a tragedy averted, an advocate who did not give up.

If there is a hero in all of these stories it is you. You believe in our staff’s expertise and support their efforts to increase access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. You never waver from your commitment to giving of yourself to uplift the people we serve, and we are sincerely thankful.

Thank you also for your support during our leadership transition. GLSP’s executive director, the incomparable Phyllis J. Holmen, retired in January 2018, and the board of directors recognized Phyllis as a GLSP Champion of Justice for her 43 years of exemplary public service, including 28 years as GLSP’s executive director. As we searched for a new executive director to lead GLSP into the future, the board and staff were encouraged by your continued loyalty and trust. We are thrilled to welcome Richard “Rick” Rufolo into the GLSP family, and we look forward with great expectation to all of the good we will do together in the years to come.

With gratitude,



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Terrica Redfield Ganzy
President, GLSP
Board of Directors

“I believe that it would have been a travesty of justice to allow a man who served his country in the Vietnam war to be so callously treated and put out on the street so close to the time of his death. I was thankful that we were able to prevent his eviction.”

**– Anna L. Bagley,
Staff Attorney**

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Mr. Rydell is a Vietnam veteran who has terminal cancer. He was referred to GLSP by his hospice nurse due to an eviction court action filed against him by his landlord. His landlord filed an eviction stating that Mr. Rydell keeps allowing people from the trailer park to wash their clothes in his home. Mr. Rydell explained that he permitted one couple who help him with his errands and light cleaning to use his dryer, not the washing machine. The parties did not have a written lease, so under Georgia law the landlord was required to provide Mr. Rydell 60 days notice before filing the court action. GLSP Staff Attorney Anna Bagley filed an answer and counterclaim for repairs, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and stubborn litigation. The counterclaim was denied, but the dispossessory warrant was dismissed for failure to provide the 60 days notice. The landlord then gave a written 60 days notice before leaving the courtroom. Mr. Rydell was able to live out his last days in the place he was comfortable, his apartment.

Ms. Sarah Hendley is elderly and has Parkinson’s disease. She lives in her own home and is mentally competent to make decisions. When she became very sick, she gave her only son a power of attorney over her income of \$1,200 monthly. Her son stole hundreds of dollars from her accounts for his own use and would tell his mother that he was entitled to be compensated for visiting her and buying her groceries. He controlled his mother with threats that he would place her in a nursing home if she made any trouble for him. Ms. Hendley was made aware of GLSP from her neighbor who was a GLSP volunteer. We executed a revocation of the power of attorney and filed it at the courthouse. Ms. Hendley’s bank accounts were immediately cut off from her son. We prepared a new will for Ms. Hendley, removing her son as a beneficiary. Ms. Hendley has full access to her money and is living a more peaceful life free from her son’s control and threats.

We received a call from a parent who said her son, Ray, was being charged by his middle school with larceny, theft, selling, purchasing or possession of stolen property. Ray was alleged to have taken a bag of chips from another middle school student and was referred to a school discipline tribunal where he faced the possibility of long-term suspension or expulsion. Ray also has a disability, but the school had no Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in place for him as required by law, despite the parent's numerous requests for an IEP.

GLSP Supervising Attorney Eugene Choi represented Ray at the discipline tribunal. Before the tribunal began, attorney Choi negotiated with the school and came to an agreement. The school dropped the larceny charge and Ray returned to school. The school agreed to evaluate Ray to determine his eligibility and services for an IEP. We agreed to implement an interim Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Attorney Choi represented Ray in an IEP meeting. Ray was found eligible for an IEP, and his IEP team developed goals, services, and supports for him. The IEP team also agreed to provide summer school services to allow Ray to catch up academically. The IEP team decided to conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) in order to develop a formal BIP going forward. Ray is enjoying school and the school sports he loves.

“Before GLSP became involved, Ray was failing academically and ran the risk of being held back. He also ran the risk of being expelled, which would make him ineligible to enjoy the school sports he loves. Ray has passed to the next grade level and will have a detailed individualized plan to address his disability going forward.”

***– Eugene Choi,
Supervising
Attorney***

“Our involvement in this case saved the client’s life. Mr. Woods had no family or friends in the area, and he would have been homeless if evicted. Homelessness meant certain death for him, because of his reliance on electricity to run his tracheal tube and ventilator. Mr. woods is susceptible to fatal infections because of the tracheal tube. Getting a judge to reconsider and overturn his original decision rarely ever happens. But, it was so important in Mr. Woods’ case, because of the risks of Mr. Woods losing his life. This case reminded me that although it might appear to be too late for us to help a client, we must exhaust all remedies, even the ones that are usually unsuccessful.”

- Sarah Hassan,
Staff Attorney

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Mr. Woods is a quadriplegic on a ventilator and a tracheal tube. He is entirely reliant on other people helping him with daily needs from getting in and out of bed to showering, eating, and all other daily tasks. He was facing imminent eviction from his federally subsidized housing. The apartment complex claimed that he failed to pay rent for several months, but he had made every attempt to pay, but they refused his payments without reason.

The apartment complex filed a dispossessory in magistrate court for nonpayment of rent. In accordance with Georgia’s tender defense law, Mr. Woods paid the rent owed, plus the cost of the dispossessory into the court’s registry. The magistrate court judge ruled in Mr. Woods’ favor and granted him continued possession of his apartment. The apartment complex appealed to state court. Mr. Woods was unrepresented at the state court hearing and the judge ruled in favor of the apartment complex. GLSP had not been contacted when these events occurred.

When GLSP was contacted by a caseworker on Mr. Woods behalf, all of the appeal deadlines had passed, and Mr. Woods had only seven days to leave his apartment before being potentially served with a writ of possession. GLSP Staff Attorney Sarah Hassan worked collaboratively with GLSP Housing Specialist Susan Reif to file a motion to set aside and stay the writ of possession in state court – a motion not often granted. The judge set aside his previous order and affirmed the order from magistrate court, which granted Mr. Woods possession of his apartment.

Ms. Williams was referred to GLSP by a local domestic violence shelter to obtain a Family Violence Act protective order to keep her estranged husband away from her and their son. Her husband had been physically and mentally abusing her before he abandoned her a year before she came to GLSP following her car catching fire in her carport in the middle of the night.

Ms. Williams had been awarded the car in a temporary order as part of a divorce the husband filed. Since separating, the husband continued to threaten her with physical abuse, so she filed for the Family Violence Act temporary protective order. In Georgia, the Family Violence Act provides for relief not available in divorces, including that law enforcement will not arrest violators of domestic standing orders but they should arrest violators of Family Violence Act orders.

GLSP Managing Attorney Sally Haskins represented Ms. Williams at a hotly contested hearing. The judge stated that Ms. Williams could not prove that her husband set her car on fire, but agreed with Haskins' argument that it was more likely than not, the appropriate standard of proof. The judge wanted to apply a criminal standard of proof to our client's allegations, but our attorney effectively argued the correct and lower standard. The judge also wanted our client to file a contempt in the pending divorce rather than file for a Family Violence Protective Order. Through a witness and store security video, attorney Haskins established that the husband violated the temporary order by following our client into a store. The husband denied it, but at the end of the hearing, the judge ordered the husband to jail for lying to the court. The judge also entered the protective order for six months.

“But for our representation, given the judge’s reluctance at the hearing, it is likely that he would have dismissed the petition, and it is doubtful the client would have been awarded the protective order. The order enables her to have some peace of mind because she can call law enforcement when her husband violates the order. The judge heard why a divorce does not provide the scope of relief many domestic violence survivors need for safety.”

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**- Sally Haskins,
Managing Attorney**

“In the 20 years since the beginning of our Family Violence Project in 1998, GLSP lawyers have served victims of family violence with aggressive high-quality lawyering and compassionate advocacy. In 2018, we closed 3,308 family violence cases and secured \$4,484,846 in financial outcomes for them.”

**- Vicky Kimbrell,
Director of Family
Violence Project**

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Ms. Mason, a family violence survivor, faced serious breast cancer without medical insurance, including Medicaid. The state agency denied her application for Medicaid claiming that she was not eligible because of a federal waiting period created as part of Welfare Reform in the mid-1990's. We filed an appeal of the denial, represented the client at an administrative hearing, filed and won a petition in a Georgia superior court, and successfully represented the client in the Georgia Court of Appeals. Because of the favorable Court of appeals decision, the state agency approved our client's application for Medicaid. With Medicaid, our client obtained life-saving medical care.

This case is one of first impression in Georgia and first in the nation to hold that a legal permanent resident who entered the U.S. before the waiting period went into effect in 1996 and remained physically present was not subject to the five-year waiting period for Medicaid eligibility imposed as part of federal Welfare Reform. Because of our advocacy, the state agency and the Office of the Attorney General are on notice about the legal application of the five-year waiting period.

Ms. Bell applied for housing with a local apartment complex but was denied because in 2014 her landlord had filed a dispossessory action against her. At that time, Ms. Bell suffered a stroke and was in the process of moving out of the apartment when she suffered a second stroke and was hospitalized. While she was hospitalized, her landlord filed the dispossessory. Ms. Bell was unaware of the dispossessory until her application for housing was denied in 2018. As a result of the denial of her housing application, the local housing authority withdrew Ms. Bell's housing voucher. Ms. Bell was living in an extended stay hotel and was on the verge of homelessness when she contacted GLSP. With staff funded by the Equal Justice Works Housing Corporation, we were able to assist Ms. Bell, and she was in a new apartment the next month. On Ms. Bell's behalf, we made a special accommodation request advocating that her prior eviction was related to her stroke and should not be considered in determining her suitability as a tenant. We then helped Ms. Bell by working with the housing authority to have her housing voucher reinstated.

We place emphasis on areas of law where the needs among Georgians with low incomes are the greatest and where representation and advocacy can have the most impact. GLSP's practice areas and special projects include:

- *Disabilities advocacy*
- *Economic and community development*
- *Education*
- *Elder rights*
- *Emergency disaster assistance*
- *Family law and family violence*
- *Farmworker rights*
- *Health care*
- *Housing*
- *Individual rights*
- *Language access*
- *Public benefits*
- *State Bar pro bono project*
- *Unemployment*

“*The guardianship provides Ms. Mitchell and her grandchildren with the security of having a stable home, income, and benefits. These critical outcomes make a difference in impacting the emotional well-being and livelihood of the children who could have been at-risk of being placed in the foster care system after the traumatic experience of losing their mother.*”

– **Tara McIntosh,**
GLSP MedLaw
Attorney

Ms. Little was a patient in a local hospital who passed away from breast cancer, leaving her four children in the care of their paternal grandmother, Ms. Mitchell who immediately opened her home to the grandchildren, though her limited income was not sufficient. GLSP attorney Tara McIntosh, who heads the MedLaw office at the hospital, filed a temporary minor guardianship on behalf of Ms. Mitchell, so that she would be eligible to apply for the core benefits and financial resources her grandchildren need to enroll them in school, and more. The probate court approved the guardianship and swore in Ms. Mitchell as the legal guardian of her four grandchildren. Two of her grandchildren were already receiving Supplemental Security Income, and we assisted Ms. Mitchell to become their representative payee. We assisted Ms. Mitchell with other resources she will need to build a new life with her grandchildren.

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MedLaw is a medical-legal partnership involving GLSP, Navicent Health, and Mercer University School of Law. MedLaw opened its doors in 2016, and is staffed by GLSP attorney Tara McIntosh and interns from Mercer Law School. MedLaw offers free civil legal assistance to indigent patients. MedLaw has received 445 referrals and has closed 222 cases involving family violence, Medicaid denials, guardianships, homelessness, and more.

GLSP's client satisfaction surveys capture our clients' voices about the impact of our services in their lives.

"The Program is wonderful for hard-working people like myself who otherwise would not be able to afford a great lawyer." – A.T.

"My lawyer went out of her way to inform and explain the complete process of the hearing to me. She was able to get the decision for denied unemployment benefits reversed, so I was able to draw benefits for 17 weeks. A lifesaver for us; gave us hope." – C.G.

"It meant so much to be able to have a fighting force on my side to help achieve the best possible success of protection and support for me and my children. It meant so much to be able to depend on a knowledgeable attorney to help assist me in the court hearing." – A.S.

"The legal help allowed me and my 6-year-old son to remain in our home, rather than face homelessness. To all single mothers, you know words cannot describe this kind of gratitude! Thank you so much for this service. You are super heroes to me and my small family. Keep fighting the good fight." – A.M.

"I wanted to get my affairs in order. I have numerous health issues. I must have called 10 lawyers from the yellow pages. Someone gave me GLSP's phone number. I can now rest and feel my children will have it easier when my time comes." – C.G.

"I felt most assuredly that I would have lost my home and everything else. But with Georgia Legal Services I got the help that I needed." – P.B.

"Without Georgia Legal Services my son would still be in that nursing home with people six to eight times his age. Once again my son and I are a happy family. We are now living together and he is getting the services he severely needs." – L.F.

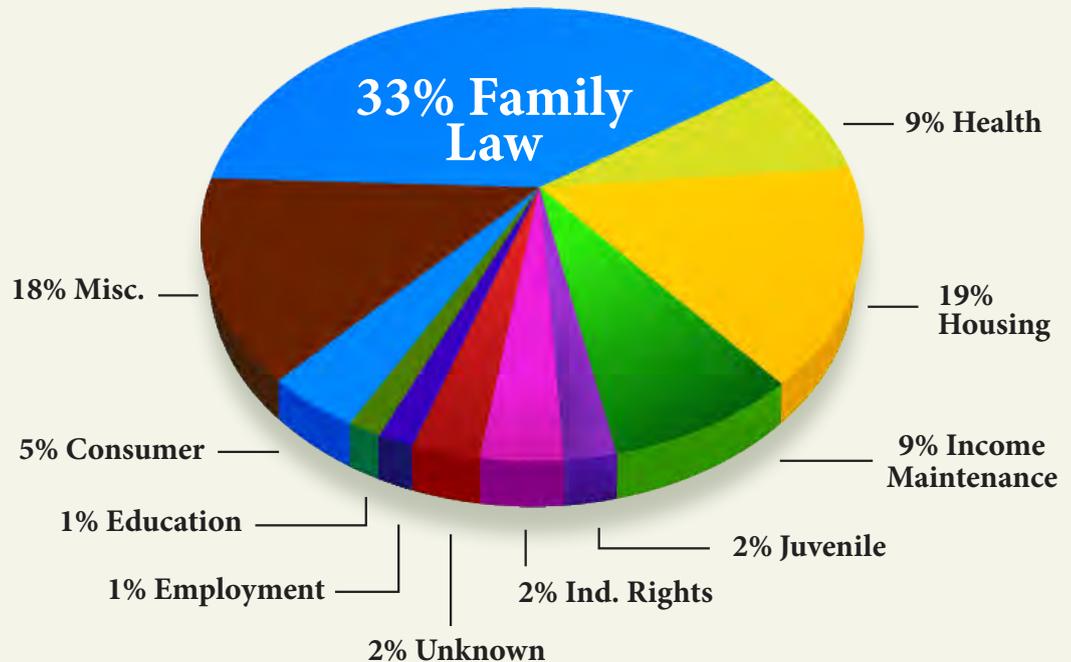
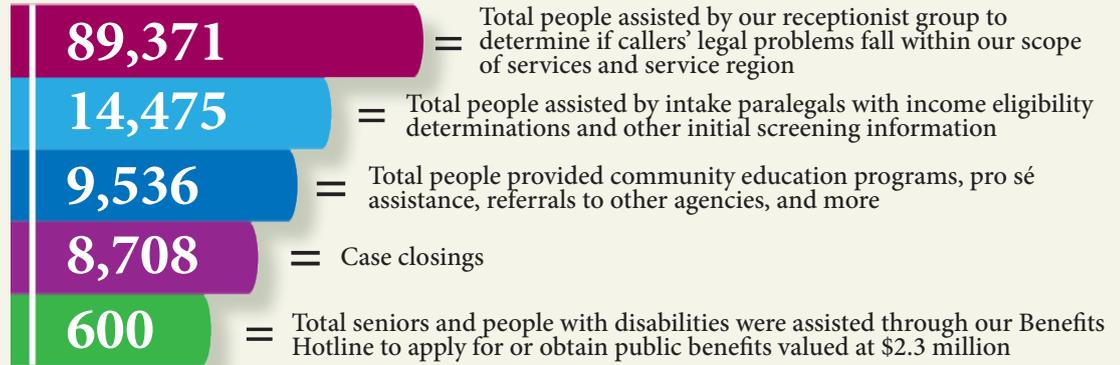
"We did not have anything to eat and I did not have a job, but thanks to GLSP my children have food and health insurance, and now they are not lacking anything." – G.F.

"I didn't just have an attorney by my side. I had a caring friend. We can never thank Georgia Legal Services enough." – S.L.

Our core priorities are to help clients to preserve their housing, maintain economic stability, and protect their individual rights. To be eligible for services, clients must reside outside metro Atlanta and have monthly incomes at or below 200% of the Federal poverty level, which is \$4,183 for a family of four in 2018. Many clients' incomes are much lower.

In 2018, women comprised 77% of our clients, and many have young children.

2018 High Impact Numbers of People Served!



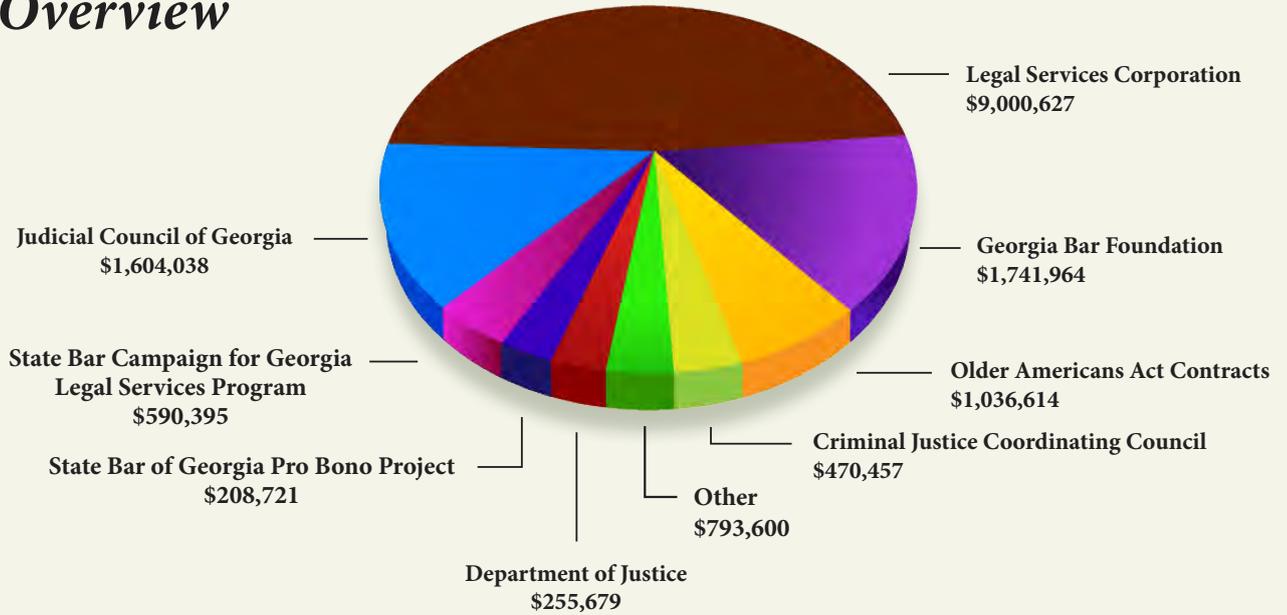
Financial Overview

2018 Income
\$15,702,095

Net Assets
Beginning of Year
\$2,875,757

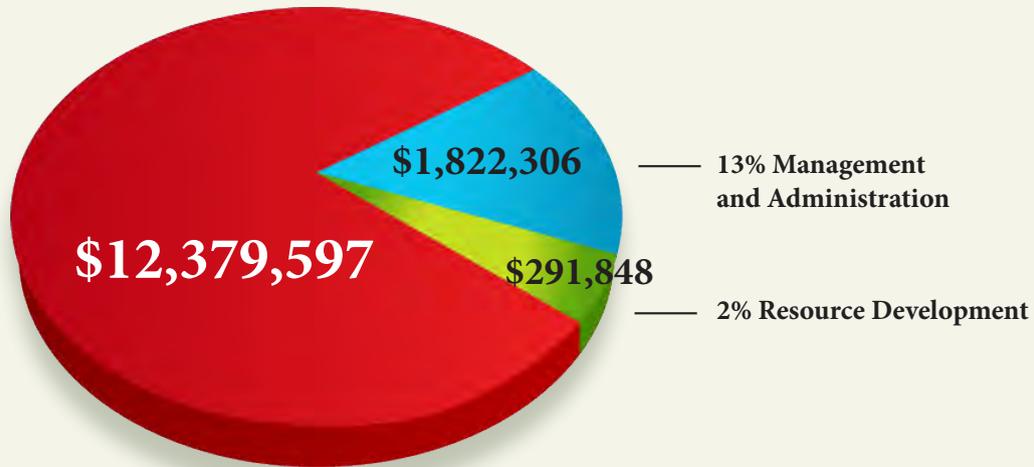
Net Assets End of Year
\$4,084,101

Increase in Net Assets
\$1,208,344



2018 Functional Expenses
\$14,493,751

85% Programs and Services



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GLS Foundation Capital Campaign Donors

The Georgia Legal Services (GLS) Foundation launched a \$1,000,000 capital campaign in January 2017, in recognition of the Foundation's 20th anniversary, and in honor of the late Senior U.S. District Court Judge Marvin Shoob, who awarded a \$1,000,000 cy pres to the Georgia Legal Services Program in 1996 for the purpose of establishing an endowment to fund the long-term stability of the organization. For more information about the capital campaign, please contact the Development Office at 404-206-5175.

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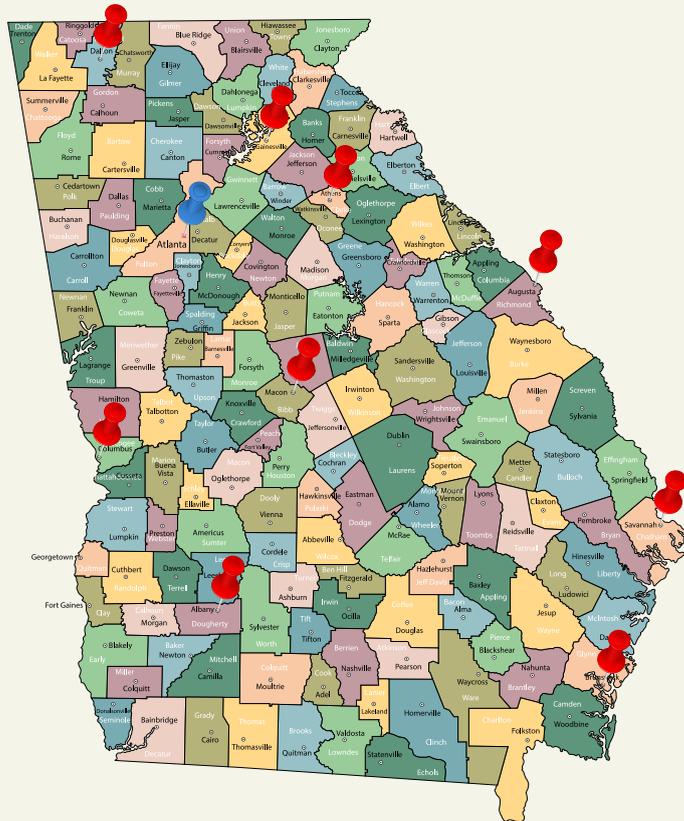
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*GLSP does not serve the metro Atlanta area.

Red pins represent GLSP's regional office locations.
Blue pin represents GLSP's Central office and the Piedmont regional office locations.



GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM® 1971 - 2018

Access to Justice and Opportunities Out of Poverty

1971

Georgia Legal Services Program incorporated by members of the Younger Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Georgia.

1990

Phyllis J. Holmen becomes the fourth executive director.

2003

Central Office of Georgia Legal Services relocates to the new State Bar Center.

2009

Georgia Legal Services launches a Latino Outreach and Education initiative to address the impact of the economic downturn on the civil legal problems of low-income Latinos outside metro Atlanta.

2012

Georgia Legal Services Executive Directory Phyllis Holmen is one of six legal services directors to participate in a White House forum to examine the state of legal aid nationwide.

2015

GLSP is awarded the Commitment to Equality Award from the State Bar of Georgia Committee to Promote Inclusion in the Profession for its work to support diversity within the legal profession and for its dedicated service to diverse communities.

2018

GLSP's 4th biennial Champions of Justice Recognition Event was held at the State Bar Center on January 25 in honor of GLSP Executive Director Phyllis J. Holmen's retirement from public service.

1976

Georgia Clients Council is founded to serve as an advisory group to Georgia Legal Services.

1996

Georgia Legal Services Foundation is established with a \$1 million cy pres award by U.S. District Judge Marvin Shoob from the remainder funds of a national class action.

2007

Georgia Legal Services opens a field office in Athens-Clarke County due to the dire need for more and better legal services for the low-income community in that area.

2010

Georgia Legal Services is named beneficiary of the signature fundraiser of the Younger Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia.

2013

GLSP is awarded GABWA's (Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys) Zenith Award for Service to the Community at GABWA's Founders' Awards Gala and Auction.

2016

GLSP completed a strategic planning process in February, 2016, to develop strategies and goals to strengthen GLSP as a statewide law firm.

1981

Georgia Legal Services and the State Bar of Georgia establish the Pro Bono Project.

2001

Georgia Legal Services launches capital campaign in Macon and successfully raises funds to purchase the historic Eagles Building for its Macon office.

2008

Georgia Legal Services expands use of technology to improve services to clients.

2011

Georgia Legal Services launches its Champions of Justice Recognition Program in honor of lawyers and community activists for advancing GLSP's mission, their contributions to justice for all, and support of GLSP.

2014

GLSP is national recipient of the 2014 American Bar Association's prestigious Hodson Award.

2017

GLSP Executive Director Phyllis Holmen officially announced her retirement to the board of directors after 43 years of exemplary public service, including 28 years as GLSP executive director.



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