




Justice and Fairness: Our Goals for All

2016
Annual Report



I Fulfilling our nation's promise of justice for all!

Remarks from Chief Justice
Hugh Thompson as featured in
GLSP's Champions of Justice
Program, Oct. 13, 2016

“What sets the United States of America apart from other countries is an independent judiciary that upholds our Constitution and enforces the rule of law for all citizens. What also sets us apart is our pledge that all people, regardless of their walk in life, must have equal access to justice and to our courts.

Most of us grew up saying the Pledge of Allegiance at school, in which we promised ‘liberty and justice for all.’ I don’t believe we ever meant, ‘liberty and justice only for those who can afford it.’

‘Equal justice for all’ is the promise embodied in our Constitution as envisioned by our forefathers. But too many hard-working Georgians believe that justice is out of their reach, either because it’s too expensive or because of where they live. Georgia’s judicial system is sound, and it is strong – for those who can afford a lawyer. But to safeguard its future, we must guarantee access to justice for all people, as our laws were not made for just a few.”

Former Chief Justice Hugh Thompson
Georgia Supreme Court
GLSP Champion of Justice

GLSP is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation whose mission is to provide civil legal services for persons with low incomes, creating access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. GLSP was founded by members of the State Bar of Georgia in 1971. Our 10 regional offices across the state serve an estimated two million people in poverty who reside outside metro Atlanta in 154 of Georgia’s 159 counties.

Client stories are used with permission. Photographs and names do not necessarily represent actual clients.

Reaching out, lifting up

We hope you will enjoy the stories of some of our clients in this Report with whom we have had the privilege of helping over this year. We are grateful for their confidence in us and we are equally grateful for your support for GLSP.

We address underlying issues that impact our clients' needs. Often the resolution of one problem can facilitate changes that will resolve those for other clients similarly situated. In our public schools, we often find policies or practices that violate students' rights and constitutional mandates. In 2016, we kept many students in schools and we persuaded school authorities to improve these procedures to comply with constitutional mandates. Our services to a Limited English Proficient student, in particular, resulted in negotiating policies by which school administrators agreed to better serve LEP students and parents.

Also in 2016, the problem of erroneous criminal records surfaced for veterans and others. We represented individuals with barriers to jobs and housing because of inaccurate criminal records. We are impacting the practices of public servants to open doors to workers and others who want a better life.

In one of our most innovative projects launched in late 2016, we worked with Navicent Hospital and Mercer Law School in Macon to establish a "Medical-Legal Partnership." This is a new service in many hospitals across the nation to offer legal services to patients with medical problems that might be caused or compounded by a legal problem. We are excited to be a part of this important partnership.

Finally, the Georgia Legal Services Foundation launched a capital campaign in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Foundation by the Hon. Marvin H. Shoob in 1996. We are building a larger pool to help provide for the long-term stability of GLSP.

Thank you, again, for staying involved.



Phyllis J. Holmen
Executive Director



Patrick J. Flinn
President



Phyllis J. Holmen



Patrick J. Flinn



Resolving Critical Needs

Ms. Green contacted our Benefits Hotline on behalf of her six-year-old daughter, Katie, who needed surgery for insertion of tubes in her ears. Ms. Green's income put her on the border of eligibility between Peachcare and Medicaid, the two major options in Georgia for medical care for children. Because of the medical necessity, the physician went ahead with the ear surgery for Katie, but was refusing to provide any other care without a decision on the source of payment. With our help in clarifying the family's income, we were able to show that Katie was eligible for Medicaid, and the child was able to secure a decision that covered ongoing care as well as the initial surgery, perhaps avoiding lifelong damage to her hearing.



Obtaining Core Benefits



The Taylors are an elderly couple with serious health problems. They received a notice from the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) indicating they were approved for Food Stamps, but their benefits card had not arrived in the mail for weeks. Ms. Taylor contacted our Benefits Hotline, which is advertised on DFCS notices. The Hotline paralegal contacted a DFCS caseworker and learned that the Taylors' benefits card had been returned to DFCS as

undeliverable. The paralegal provided the correct mailing address, and the caseworker mailed out the benefits card that day. Ms. Taylor contacted our office the next week to express how grateful she was to have help with food.

In 2016, our Benefits Hotline assisted 906 clients to obtain \$574,087 in core benefits. Callers must have their problems resolved rather quickly, because they call the Hotline at the most critical moments. We have filed more than 3,000 benefits applications and renewals since the inception of the Benefits Hotline in 2012. At least 91% of Hotline clients have monthly incomes below 150% of the federal poverty level. Our work is improving the quality of health and wellbeing for children with special needs, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

GLSP's Records Restrictions Project

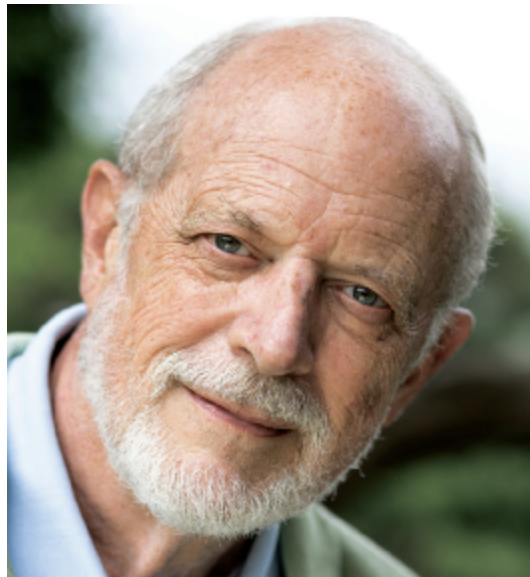
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offers second chances for people who have legal problems that hinder job, education, and housing opportunities due to an erroneous past criminal record. We have helped more than 300 people since the project's inception in 2015. Our legal assistance can often make a difference in cases involving failed background checks for certain professions; lack of required identification for employment, such as driver's licenses or birth certificates; defaulted student loans; or needs for disability accommodation under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in hiring or job retention.



Mr. Lowell was convicted of a misdemeanor offense in 1999, at the age of 18. Over the years, the conviction more and more interfered with his work goals. He contacted us for legal assistance to have the record expunged. Although "expungements" are not available in Georgia, records can be restricted from public view under certain circumstances. We filed a petition to have Mr. Lowell's youthful offender conviction restricted, and he is now able to successfully secure a better paying job and enjoy a better life.

Offering Second Chances



Mr. Handley came to GLSP as a homeless 69-year-old Vietnam veteran. He had been denied housing at a USDA Rural Development federally funded complex based on a criminal record. In 1989, Mr. Lowell was convicted of misdemeanor assault, and released based on credit for time served. With our advocacy involving several exchanges of letters, the complex agreed to provide housing to Mr. Lowell, as well as possibly paying for furniture and part of his deposit.

We help to break the cycle of poverty among veterans through the legal assistance we offer them to maintain housing, or obtain access to quality information about benefits for which they qualify, but many are not aware. We target the most vulnerable veterans in our community, including younger veterans, elderly frail veterans, and women veterans who are in poverty and could improve the quality of their lives with our assistance. Veterans comprise 7% of Georgia's population and 12% of its homeless population, according to 2014 American Community Survey Reports from the U.S. Census.



Preserving Family Housing



The Culver family was evicted from their home when the landlord failed a federal inspection. The landlord responded by evicting the Culvers and denying the return of their security deposit. With our legal assistance, the Culvers had the wrongful eviction reversed, maintained their Section 8 housing voucher and clean credit rating, and received treble damages against the landlord for the failure to return the security deposit. The Culvers returned to their home. Our involvement was vital in keeping this family together.

Evictions can be complicated and detrimental to the stability of working families. Homeless families lose jobs looking for another place to live. Their children miss school for long periods that often lead to dropping out. With few other affordable housing options, homeless families relocate to housing that is not better, but has more housing problems, or they move into neighborhoods that are not safer, but have higher crime rates. They pay up to 80% of their incomes for rent to live in housing that is usually indecent or substandard, because too many landlords fail to maintain the properties and pocket the cash, instead, for their own benefit. Our work on eviction cases maintains housing and keeps families together.



Maintaining Financial Assets

Mr. Matthews tried to withdraw money from a savings account his deceased wife left in her name. Mr. Matthews has severe disabilities, including a tracheostomy. The bank informed him that he needed to probate the estate before the money could be withdrawn from the account. Mr. Matthews obtained the forms from the probate court, but he could not understand them. Someone at the court referred him to our office. We advised Mr. Matthews that there was an alternative to probating the estate, and we drafted a bank affidavit instead. When Mr. Matthews withdrew the account balance of \$1,600, he said the affidavit was like a “get out of jail free” card.

Ms. James contacted us to request her name be placed on the deed to her home. When her husband died a couple of years ago, he left a will naming Ms. James as the executrix. The couple’s home was paid off, but Ms. James could not obtain a new homeowner’s insurance policy for roof problems, since the claim checks would be issued in her husband’s name. We referred Ms. James to a pro bono attorney who assisted her to have the original will probated and the deed changed in her name.

We give high priority to cases in which family assets are at risk.

We offer opportunities for pro bono lawyers to assist in these cases. In 2016, we leveraged approximately \$2.8 million in donated pro bono services for 1,087 cases, and 15,000 hours of pro bono services.



Eradicating Domestic Violence

“Most domestic violence victims do not have the financial ability to employ an attorney. Usually the alleged abusers have the resources to hire an attorney and it causes an extreme hardship for the women to appear in court pro sé. Without Georgia Legal Services, many victims of domestic violence would have no legal representation.”

The Honorable Brenda S. Weaver
Chief Judge, Appalachian Judicial Circuit

Ms. Smith contacted us for help when she was unable to pay her rent after discovering the bank account she shared with her abusive husband was locked. He was in jail facing 10 felony charges for battering his wife and firing repeatedly at police officers during a 10-hour standoff at their home involving tear gas and surveillance robots. While in jail, he had removed his wife from their joint bank account. Ms. Smith was evicted from their ransacked home following her husband's arrest. She feared her husband would be released from jail and find out where she was living, and attack her again.

We assisted Ms. Smith in filing a Temporary Protective Order with provisions for spousal support and access to the bank account. Her husband refused to comply, and we filed a motion for contempt. We talked to the bank's vice president about Ms. Smith's TPO, and he agreed to unlock the joint account. Ms. Smith was able to pay her rent and other expenses.

In 2016, we closed 3,256 cases for domestic violence survivors and their children, and secured \$4,854,560 for child support, housing, food stamp benefits, Medicaid, TANF benefits (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and other financial support. Our legal representation results in the economic security survivors need to gain their freedom.

Protecting Students' Rights



Brian is an 11th grader who was at-risk of being expelled from his school. He had been suspended, moved to an alternative school, and scheduled for a disciplinary hearing as a result of alleged disruptive behavior. Pending the hearing he was placed in an alternative school where his Individual Education Plan (IEP) was not being followed, causing him great distress. His requests for accommodation as scheduled by his IEP, including access to outside air and rest from school work, were not

being followed. We undertook an investigation to determine if Brian's incident was a result of his disabilities. Among other documents, we secured video footage to show the details of the events at the incident. At the manifestation hearing, we discussed with school officials and caseworkers how Brian's incident took place and whether his IEP had been followed. School officials conceded that Brian's behavior was a manifestation of the school's failure to follow his IEP. The school decided to do more testing and develop appropriate academic supports for Brian.

GLSP's #StudentsHaveRights Campaign raises awareness among students and parents about our legal representation in cases where students have been harshly disciplined or charged for minor, non-violent offenses in school. We have heightened the priority of our education work as vital to the success of young people in escaping poverty and avoiding the school-to-prison pipeline. When students are ousted from school before they complete high school, many end up in our criminal justice system.



Addressing Language Access

Ms. Ruiz met one of our lawyers when the lawyer was circuit riding in her community and meeting with other clients. Ms. Ruiz said that she was receiving her child's report cards and other school letters in English, and not in Spanish, which is her native language. We raised the issue and discovered the school district had no district-wide policy to ensure that parents with limited English proficiency have access to language access services as required by Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The school district agreed to work with us to ensure the district would have a policy to effectively address language access issues. Our work resulted in the first language access plan for the school district.



We launched a *Keeping Latino Students in School Initiative* in 2016, with a grant from an anonymous donor to support legal representation, advocacy, and outreach to Latino public school students and their parents. Our goal is to address language access issues in the schools.

2016 *Champions* OF JUSTICE



Hon. Patricia Barron

I am blessed to have been taught by Georgia Legal Services to have the courtroom as my classroom, and to have justice serve as the motivating factor for both. It has been my honor to serve the citizens of Georgia as an attorney and judge. I extend a heartfelt thank you to Georgia Legal Services for this recognition.

Judge Patricia Barron

Magistrate Court of Athens-Clarke County

Hon. Patricia Barron (Athens) is a 20-year veteran of GLSP who served from July 1979 to July 1999 as a staff attorney, supervising attorney, and a managing attorney. In 2001, she became Associate Magistrate Court Judge in Athens-Clarke County, from which she ultimately became Chief Magistrate Judge in 2002. In 2015, she was recognized as Georgia Magistrate of the Year by the Georgia Council of Magistrates.

Champions of Justice 2016

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John Cromartie

What a joy and honor it was to serve for over 20 years of my legal career as a small part of the legal services movement. Legal Services is a very committed group of people, dedicated to the best interests of others in a world that is often focused on self-interest rather than serving others. It is work that has made a difference. You are a blessing to our profession and to our world.

– **John Cromartie**

Former GLSP Executive Director

John Cromartie (Gainesville) came to GLSP shortly after its founding in 1971. He joined as Director of Litigation and served as Executive Director from January 1972 - July 1990. He fostered the development of GLSP through early opposition from the Bar, recruiting top notch young lawyers, and encouraging staff attorneys to take on major and controversial challenges, such as Georgia's inadequate prison system. He argued a major case involving the institutionalization of children twice in the United States Supreme Court, gaining relief for many children. In 1990, he left GLSP to become a Methodist minister.



**Harold T.
"Hal" Daniel**

In The Betrayed Profession, Sol Linowitz wrote: "If the legal profession does not stand for equal justice under the law, then it is hard to see what it does stand for." I agree completely, and I support Georgia Legal Services because its mission is to provide access to the civil justice system for people who, for lack of financial resources, would be denied equal justice.

– **Harold T. "Hal" Daniel, Jr.**

Former GLSP Board President and State Bar President (1995-96)

Harold T. "Hal" Daniel, Jr. (Atlanta) has been a dedicated supporter of GLSP for decades, having served on the board of directors, including several years as president. As president of the State Bar of Georgia (1995-96), Hal led a group of other Georgia lawyers and Georgia Supreme Court Justices on a trip to Washington, D.C., to urge Georgia's legislative delegation to support funding for legal services for the poor. Hal currently serves as Chair of the Fundraising Committee of the Georgia Legal Services Foundation.

A Salute to Our Supporters

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The following individuals and law firms contributed \$150 or more to the "And Justice for All" State Bar Campaign for the Georgia Legal Services Program from 4/1/2016 – 3/31/2017.

We are grateful for your generosity!

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The Georgia Legal Services (GLS) Foundation is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization by the IRS. Gifts are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

To make a contribution to the GLS Foundation go to www.glsp.org, or mail your gift to GLS Foundation, Development Office, 104 Marietta Street, Suite 250, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.

Financial Overview

NET ASSETS - BEGINNING of YEAR \$ 3,134,934

2016 INCOME

Legal Services Corporation	\$ 8,587,737
Older Americans Act	\$ 1,487,962
Judicial Council of Georgia	\$ 1,574,748
State Bar of Georgia Campaign for Georgia Legal Services Program	\$ 373,490
Georgia Bar Foundation	\$ 117,370
Department of Justice	\$ 321,258
State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project	\$ 212,216
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council	\$ 190,985
Other	\$ 1,231,727

TOTAL \$ 14,097,493

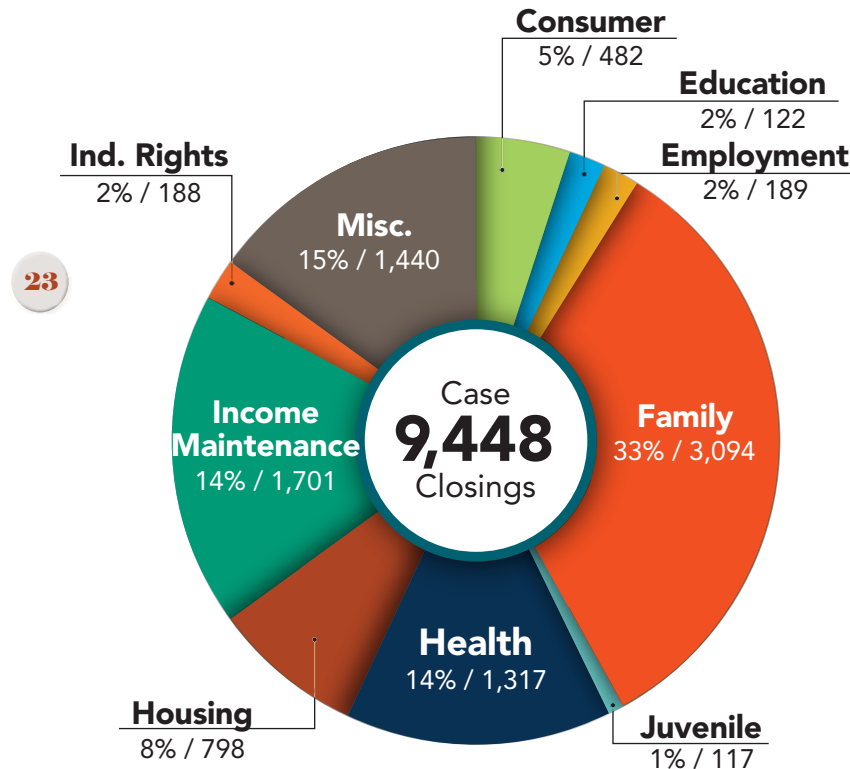
2016 EXPENSES

Salaries	\$ 8,061,229
Fringe Benefits	\$ 3,683,849
Space	\$ 989,559
Equipment	\$ 181,008
Contract Services	\$ 196,151
Travel	\$ 502,633
Telephone	\$ 226,047
Supplies	\$ 203,215
Library	\$ 75,151
Audit	\$ 40,000
Professional Liability & General Insurance	\$ 43,050
Litigation	\$ 47,156
Other	\$ 263,627

TOTAL \$ 14,512,675

NET ASSETS - END of YEAR \$ 2,719,752

9,448 Case Closings



Our Statewide Centralized Intake Unit (SCIU) is the first important step in our service delivery system for clients. Six receptionists and seven intake paralegals handle all incoming calls from across the state under the direction, training, and guidance of a managing attorney.

106,643 calls were handled by our Receptionist Group in 2016

Our Receptionist Group assists callers to determine if their legal problems fall within our scope of services and service regions. Many callers request help for legal problems we do not handle, such as criminal problems or automobile accidents. Other callers reside in metro Atlanta, and we refer those calls to the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. Some callers have incomes that are above our eligibility requirements. A number of people who call do not speak English and are transferred to our language line for access to interpreters.

11,581 calls were handled by our Intake Paralegals in 2016

At this stage, we determine if the callers' legal problems meet our priorities. GLSP's intake paralegals assist callers with income eligibility and other information to guide us in helping with the legal problem to be resolved. We are careful to address any issues or concerns that could affect a person's eligibility. Our SCIU managing attorney handles any conflicts of interest, or with more difficult calls, confirms if a legal problem meets our guidelines. Spanish speakers who prefer to talk to a bi-lingual intake paralegal are referred to our Spanish Intake Program (SIP) for further assistance. Intakes that are completed are referred to our offices for case acceptance.

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(800) 334-6865



GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM® 1971-2016

1971	1976	1981	1990	1996	2001
Georgia Legal Services Program incorporated by members of the Younger Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Georgia.	Georgia Clients Council is founded to serve as an advisory group to Georgia Legal Services.	Georgia Legal Services and the State Bar of Georgia establish the Pro Bono Project.	Phyllis J. Holmen becomes the fourth executive director.	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.	Georgia Legal Services launches capital campaign in Macon and successfully raises funds to purchase the historic Eagles Building for its Macon Office.
2003	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Central Office of Georgia Legal Services relocates to the new State Bar Center.	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.	Georgia Legal Services expands use of technology to improve services to clients.	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.	Georgia Legal Services is named the beneficiary of the signature fundraiser of the Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia.	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.
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Georgia Legal Services Executive Director Phyllis Holmen is one of six legal services directors to participate in a White House forum to examine the state of legal aid nationwide.	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.	GLSP is the national recipient of the 2014 American Bar Association's prestigious Hodson Award.	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.	GLSP completed a strategic planning process in February, 2016, to develop strategies and goals to strengthen GLSP as a statewide law firm.	



GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM®

Access to Justice and Opportunities Out of Poverty

