Statement of Opposition to Future Cuts in the Legal Services Corporation Budget

Endorsed January 2016

WHEREAS, the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) is the national association of Asian Pacific American attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students, representing the interests of over 50,000 attorneys and approximately 75 national, state and local Asian Pacific American bar associations; NAPABA members include solo practitioners, large firm lawyers, corporate counsel, legal service and non-profit attorneys, and lawyers serving at all levels of government; and NAPABA is committed to addressing civil rights issues confronting Asian Pacific American communities and people of color;

WHEREAS, the Legal Services Corporation (“LSC”) was formed in 1974 with bipartisan Congressional support to ensure that all Americans have equal access to legal services and the justice system, regardless of their ability to pay;

WHEREAS, LSC is the single largest provider of civil legal aid for the nation’s poor;

WHEREAS, LSC currently funds 134 local programs with approximately 813 offices, serving every county, state, and congressional district in the United States and its territories;

WHEREAS, local programs funded through LSC provide direct legal services to approximately two million constituents with incomes at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level based on past census data;

WHEREAS, local programs funded through LSC provide legal assistance through community outreach presentations, pro bono referrals, and other legal assistance to approximately two million constituents with incomes near, or below, the federal poverty level;

WHEREAS, LSC grant programs such as the Pro Bono Innovation Fund have expanded initiatives that engage the private bar as a critical resource for supporting legal aid attorneys in addressing the civil legal needs of the low-income community;

WHEREAS, over 63 million Americans, including 18 million children, may currently qualify for federally funded legal assistance;

WHEREAS, LSC Justice Gap studies in 2005 and 2009 reported that one in every two individuals who qualified for and actually sought assistance from LSC-funded programs was denied help because of lack of resources;

WHEREAS, clients of legal services organizations represent all ethnicities and ages, including the working poor, veterans, people facing foreclosure or evictions, families with children,
farmers, people with disabilities, domestic violence victims, natural disaster victims, and the elderly;

WHEREAS, any reduction to LSC’s Fiscal Year 2017 or future years’ budget would reduce the ability of thousands of the most vulnerable Americans to gain access to critical legal assistance in matters where their homes, their safety, and their independence are at stake;

WHEREAS, any reduction to LSC’s Fiscal Year 2017 or future years’ budget would disproportionately impact Asian Pacific American communities and families with incomes near or below the federal poverty level;

WHEREAS, any reduction to LSC’s Fiscal Year 2017 budget would have a disproportionately large impact on programs that rely most heavily on the federal grant, particularly in the states of Alabama, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nevada, South Dakota, and Wyoming;

WHEREAS, a broad coalition of state bar associations and minority bar associations, including every state bar and all major bars of color, have supported an increase in LSC funding.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NAPABA:

1. Opposes any proposals to reduce funding for the LSC’s Fiscal Year 2017 and future years.

2. Calls upon Congress to support increased funding for the LSC’s Fiscal Year 2017 and future years to help meet the urgent need of vulnerable Americans who need legal assistance.

3. Authorizes its president, board, and staff to communicate the content of this resolution to its members, affiliate and associate organizations, other bar associations, members of Congress, the Administration, the press, and others and to take steps to implement this resolution, as they deem necessary.

4. Supports this resolution as a policy priority until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.