

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 105

BY SENATOR LAFLEUR

A RESOLUTION

To designate Wednesday, May 1, 2019, as Civil Legal Aid Day at the Louisiana State Capitol.

WHEREAS, indigent citizens have no right to counsel in civil matters, yet the outcome of civil legal matters often results in life-altering consequences; and

WHEREAS, equal access to a court system is a basic tenant of a just society and is essential to fairness in our civil justice system; and

WHEREAS, access to legal services is a foundation of our legal system, regardless of the ability to pay; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's poverty rate is among the nation's highest at almost twenty percent with estimates that two hundred thirty thousand poor Louisiana citizens will experience a legal need each year; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, Acadiana Legal Service Corporation and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services Corporation provided forty-eight thousand eight hundred sixty-seven people with increased access to safety, employment, and security; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana civil legal service providers Acadiana Legal Service Corporation and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services Corporation are cornerstones to ensuring equal access to justice for all by providing legal representation in merited civil cases to Louisiana's poor; and

WHEREAS, these organizations ensure that constituents in Louisiana are served, including veterans seeking service benefits, victims of domestic violence seeking protection from abusers, seniors fighting consumer fraud, homeowners opposing unlawful foreclosure, and parents seeking child support; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana is one of only four states in the nation in which the state provides no statewide appropriation nor dedicated statewide fines or fees to support Louisiana's civil legal aid providers; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of all stakeholders in Louisiana's justice system to ensure access to justice for all, and each year Louisiana attorneys provide hundreds of thousands of hours in volunteer legal services; and

WHEREAS, a study commissioned by the Louisiana Bar Foundation found that the total net social return on investment for Louisiana's civil legal aid programs during the 2018 fiscal year was nine hundred thirteen percent, or stated differently, for every one dollar invested in Louisiana's civil legal aid providers, these programs deliver \$9.13 in immediate and long-term consequential financial benefits; and

WHEREAS, investments in civil legal aid causes a ripple effect that affects the families served and the community at large, meaning that schools, businesses, government agencies, and the state as a whole benefit from the resolution of civil legal problems.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby designate Wednesday, May 1, 2019, as Civil Legal Aid Day at the Louisiana State Capitol and does hereby recognize the monumental impact of civil legal aid both for Louisiana citizens directly receiving services, as well as the state which reaps immediate and long-term consequential financial benefits.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE