

amendment. America has a 25-year commitment to helping those who cannot afford legal assistance and it is outrageous that today's Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill severely cuts back on this commitment.

For my colleagues who are not satisfied that every single mistake has been corrected that this legal assistance group has made in the past, I ask my colleagues, do we cut the Defense budget by 50 percent when the Defense Department loses their records and costs this country millions and billions of dollars? Of course, we do not.

By providing the Legal Services Corporation with less than half of its current funding, 50 percent less, this bill is effectively denying low-income individuals, including women, seniors, and veterans access to legal advice and representation that they need, help that they must have.

Mr. Chairman, Legal Services funding has a direct impact on thousands and thousands of peoples' lives, and this amendment will put some of the money back. It will help low-income individuals. It will particularly help low-income mothers, mothers who are victims of domestic violence, mothers whose fathers, husbands, their children's fathers who have abandoned them. It will help these individuals fight back and regain control of their lives.

Legal Services Corporation-funded programs provide these women, victims of domestic violence, with more legal assistance than any other organization across this Nation.

This base legislation tells women and tells their children that they are not a priority. How can we do this? I urge my colleagues, join together and vote for this amendment. Vote to increase funding for legal services to help veterans, to help seniors, to help mothers and to help their children.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Serrano-Ramstad-Delahunt amendment to increase some funding for Legal Services Corporation.

The Legal Services Corporation is very important in assisting vulnerable people in our society. Women and children are among the vulnerable who, without assistance, often find themselves in abusive situations that they cannot control. The impact of these situations is significant, and it could well result in homelessness and a loss of necessary financial resources for food, maintenance, and health care.

To give one example from my own district, as a result of domestic violence and in fear for her safety and that of her 5 children, a woman left her husband of 15 years. He had been the primary support for the family; and she was able, on her own, to obtain housing although it was still neither decent nor safe. Yet, because of her financial situation, she was threatened with eviction.

Legal Services helped her to get Section 8 housing, and the family was able to relocate to decent housing with adequate space. This stabilized the family during a very disruptive and unsettling time.

Millions of children are the victims of abuse from their parents and others who are responsible for their care. This abuse goes on somewhere in the country every minute of the day, and Legal Services in Maryland represents children who are neglected or abused.

Such neglect or abuse ranges from a child being left alone by a parent or not being provided a nutritional meal, to physical or sexual abuse that results in severe injury and, all too often, death.

Legal Services has helped the infant that has been abandoned at birth, the child who is left unattended, the children who have been beaten, burned by cigarette butts because he would not stop crying or scalded by hot water to teach him a lesson.

These children are vulnerable and, without the protection of the law, they would be endangered and lost. Legal Services advocacy on behalf of children assures that they will not be the subject of abuse, it helps to secure services for children such as housing support, health care, food, educational programs and necessary counseling.

The work of Legal Services on behalf of families and children touches at the very heart of what we value in this country, decent housing, adequate health care, food and a safe environment.

Because of the importance of safety in our society, these legal service programs have supported legislation to prevent abuse and to protect the abused. In general, the States are not allocating funds for civil legal services for poor citizens.

Without this federally-funded program, the most vulnerable members of our society will not have the ability to get inside that courtroom door to seek the judicial protection of their rights that they deserve.

We must assure that sufficient funds are available, and I, therefore, support very strongly and urge support by my colleagues for this amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will rise informally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida) assumed the Chair.

#### SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

#### DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, THE JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

The Committee resumed its sitting.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS) and the ranking member, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO).

Just a few minutes ago, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles denied the requests of Gary Graham for clemency and an opportunity for a new hearing. At this time, his execution is set for 6:00 p.m. today.

Gary Graham continues to press his case to show his innocence and argues that witnesses that could have presented his case of innocence were not heard. Gary Graham, 17 years old, did not have the counsel that might have generated a trial that might have had the opportunity for fact finders to make a full and open decision.

Justice in this Nation should not be determined by one's wealth, and although the Legal Services Corporation does not deal in criminal matters or death penalty cases, I use this day's tragedy to argue for the amendment before us, because it is important for the American people to understand that we are a Nation of laws.

I believe the American people accept that. It is a voluntary system where we commit ourselves to be governed by laws. We seek to address our grievances by the legal system, and we go into courts or proceed under administrative proceedings.

The Legal Services Corporation that generates dollars into our local community, in my instance, the Gulf Coast Legal Foundation in Houston, Texas that I served as a board member on, argues for those who cannot speak for themselves. It argues for those who cannot afford the billable hours, and it provides the bare minimum quality of life issues that many of us take for granted.

It works with families who do not have housing. It assists the homeless or those who are in transition, and it is interesting as we look at the history of the funding of Legal Services, it has had a very rocky history over these last couple of years.

There has been no denial that it has not done good work, that it has not worked with those in the Indian population here in America, that it has not worked with mothers of children needing services, as I indicated, educational services, special education, housing, food services and mental health services.

But yet this organization has been attacked, and I wonder has it been attacked because its clientele is voiceless. It cannot lobby the United States Congress to ensure that it gets the money. I look at its budgeting, and I see that over the years 1995, \$400 million, but yet steadily it has gone down, and this committee puts in \$141 million, a mere \$141 million to fund Legal Services Corporation for the whole Nation.