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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

May 06, 2009

Committee On Appropriations
Ranking Member, Agriculture Subcommittee
Defense Subcommittee

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Helaine Barnett
President
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K Street, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington DC 20007-3522

RE: National volunteer lawyer support website to enhance quality legal assistance for Veterans and Servicemembers

Dear Ms. Barnett:

I write to voice my strong support for the **national advocate support website Technology Initiative Grant** application by the Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP) in partnership with the State Bar of Georgia. The State Bar of Georgia Veterans and Military Pro Bono Committee has developed a statewide legal referral program for veterans and servicemembers. The Georgia Legal Services Program and the State Bar Pro Bono Project presently provide quality web-based support to volunteer lawyers across Georgia. This application for technology funds will build on the Georgia experience to develop a national advocacy support website that will be home to federal and state model content for potential volunteers and other advocates. The national advocacy support website will house quality volunteer support materials, online trainings and webinars geared toward legal issues faced by veterans and servicemembers.

While the Internet is populated by dozens of websites purporting to provide resources for veterans and the military, no site provides a one-stop location for lawyers for a range of quality legal advocacy resources. Additionally, current web resources for advocates usually address narrow issues, provide materials to advocates only on a fee basis, or provide resources in formats that discourage efficient use by volunteers new to the issues. The accuracy and "freshness" of most current web resources cannot be determined.

This proposal addresses the current gaps in volunteer advocate resources; aims to provide a variety of resource formats for volunteers, including video, podcasts and webinars; and promotes collaboration and shared resources. The uniformity of veteran laws and issues present a unique opportunity to develop a content resource that can be shared nationally with little or no modification needed by advocacy programs and their volunteer advocates. Further, the proposal creates a national community of advocates who can share news, training events, and their own contact information.

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The longtime partnership between the Georgia Legal Services Program and the State Bar of Georgia reflects the healthy relationship between the legal services community and the private bar necessary to develop or acquire web content and create and sustain a broad cross-section of the community of advocates.

I believe a national advocacy support website for advocates of veterans and servicemembers is needed. I urge you to fund this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jack".

Jack Kingston
Member of Congress