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October 17, 2013

Mark Freedman  
Assistant General Counsel  
Legal Services Corporation  
3333 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20007

VIA EMAIL: [pairulemaking@lsc.gov](mailto:pairulemaking@lsc.gov)

**RE: 2013 PAI Rulemaking Workshops**

Dear Mr. Freedman:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the September 17 PAI Rulemaking Workshop. Our brief advice clinics are very important to our communities and to our program, so we appreciate that LSC has given us the opportunity to provide input into this process.

I wish to supplement my oral testimony with this letter and the attached newspaper article. This article appeared in the July 4, 2013 print edition of the *Zanesville Times Recorder*. As you can see, the Perry County Clinic enjoys tremendous support from the local judiciary and it has been recognized several times for its contribution to the community. The article also illustrates the various components that come together to form a successful clinic.

In my testimony, I asked that LSC consider relaxing the current requirement that all clinic participants complete a full eligibility screening. We believe that a relaxed screening standard would give the legal aid programs the flexibility to be a community partner in local efforts, like the Perry County Clinic, without being seen as dictating to local partners how their clinic is to be ran while also ensuring that LSC funds are primarily being used to serve the low-income community.

Again, thank you for taking the time to carefully consider the proposed changes to LSC's Private Attorney Involvement regulation and for allowing us to participate in this process. Please contact me if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

Melissa D. Skilliter, Esq.  
Pro Bono Coordinator

October 17, 2013  
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Enc.: Donation Provides Funds for Legal Aid in Perry County, published July 4, 2013 by  
*Zanesville Times Recorder*

Cc: Thomas W. Weeks, Executive Director, Ohio State Legal Services Association  
James M. Daniels, Director, Southeastern Ohio Legal Services

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# Donation provides funds for legal aid in Perry County

## Concerted effort helps hundreds with free consultation

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The key players in the Perry County Legal Clinic discuss a form: Melissa Skilliter, SEOLS pro bono coordinator; David Little, SEOLS managing attorney in Zanesville; Judge Luann Cooperrider, Perry County Juvenile Court; and Judge Dean Wilson, Perry County Court. / Patrick O'Neill/Times Recorder

Written by Patrick O'Neill Staff Writer

**NEW LEXINGTON** — The Perry County [legal](#) clinic has received another donation — this time \$10,000 — for its service to the community.

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The clinic has helped nearly 500 people who cannot afford legal consultation with pro bono legal services since it was founded in September 2008.

What started out as an enthusiastic, albeit underfunded, effort by a duo of Perry County judges — Judge Luann Cooperrider and Judge Dean Wilson — has blossomed into a program that helps not only people in need of legal counsel, but people who provide it.

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The clinic meets from 4 to 6 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month at the Perry County Courthouse. For more information, call 740-342-1118.

“Those receiving help are appreciative,” said David Little, of Southeastern Ohio Legal Services. “But the [lawyers](#) really enjoy this, too. Some come in a bit grumpy at first, thinking they don’t want to do this, but even many of them come back regularly because they enjoy it so much.”

Mandy Hiles, 29, of New Lexington, showed up 20 minutes early to a recent clinic, eager to [talk](#) with a lawyer.

“This is my first time in here,” Hiles said. “I’ve been raising my stepdaughter for 11 months. Both her father and mother are in jail, and I can’t afford legal consultation. The filing fees alone were \$100, then there are court costs. ... I’ve got my fingers crossed that they can help me.”

The private donor of the \$10,000 preferred to remain anonymous, but is well aware of the effect the clinic is having in the community, which is why, said SEOLS Coordinator Melissa Skilliter, the donor continues to offer funding.

The clinic is funded indirectly by a series of federal and state grants issued to SEOLS.

[Funds](#) also have been procured through awards, such as the \$5,000 John and Ginny Elam pro bono award, given to Riley Crandall, of Thornville, in 2009 for exceptional charitable representation. Crandall gave that money to the clinic.

The Perry County group also received the State Bar Association’s award for top pro bono service in Ohio for 2012.

The money is used primarily for two things: screening individuals to make sure they qualify for free legal aid and retraining lawyers who agree to donate their time.

The eight lawyers assisting the clinic receive training in continued legal education, which helps them stay current with the Ohio Supreme Court’s continuing legal education requirement of 24 hours every two years.

“The beauty of this is that we’ve been able to get some new blood in here,” said Wilson, who is the Perry County Court judge. “The money we’ve received will hopefully get folks that do indigent work in our courts to participate more actively.”

Jillian Von-Gunten, a Zanesville [attorney](#) volunteering at the clinic, said she enjoys the variety of cases she handles.

“I think, first and foremost, you have to understand that not everyone has access to (an attorney),” Von-Gunten said. “I think we have a duty to give back to our communities. I like being around all different kinds of cases like this.”

The attorneys can’t fill out the pro se paperwork, but they can help guide people through the process.

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Cooperrider, who the Perry County Juvenile Court Judge, said the clinic has helped people with tax exemptions, visitation rights, domestic disputes and countless other issues.

“You never know who’s going to come in,” Cooperrider said with a smile. “I told a new lawyer, ‘Oh, it’s all 90 percent domestic stuff, you’ll be fine.’ One of his first people asked about an immigration issue.”

The clinic gave legal aid to 23 people during its first year. Last year, 107 people received help.

Of the 30 counties that SEOLS operates in, Skilliter said Perry County has some of the best participation [rates](#).

“These people come from all around this county,” Little said. “They are so appreciative of the idea that someone will actually listen to them and help them. That appreciation seems stronger and more genuine here than I’ve seen it elsewhere.”

About 10 to 12 people attend the clinics each month. Cooperrider and Wilson said they can and would help twice that many.

They urged people who have legal problems but might not be able to afford an attorney to come in and talk.

“Oftentimes people come in and think they know what the issue is,” Wilson said. “Then they start talking, and it’s during that discussion that they uncover the real issue.”

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