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NEWS RELEASE

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ALSC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT ENDS SEPTEMBER 30, 2005

The Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women has not renewed funding for Alaska Legal Services Corporation's Rural Domestic Violence project. Since 1997, Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) has represented victims of spouse abuse, partner abuse, child abuse, and child sexual abuse. Nearly 1100 victims and their families have received services under this project. Over 3,500 attorney hours have been provided free of charge to Alaska's battered and abused. After September 30, 2005, this service will no longer be provided except in those communities where local funding is available to support these cases.

"Our staff feels horrible about having to turn down so many applicants who need our help so drastically, but we have no choice," said Executive Director Andy Harrington. This loss of federal funding could not come at a worse time. The State of Alaska, which formerly funded ALSC, provided no direct appropriation to the poverty law organization in FY 2006. "Particularly in Alaska, with a projected budget surplus of up to \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2006, it is unconscionable that the State of Alaska does not directly fund ALSC to assist with the fundamental legal problems facing Alaska's poor and battered residents," observed ALSC President Vance Sanders.

As a result of this loss of funding, three attorney positions will be cut November 1, 2005. These positions are based in Fairbanks, Anchorage and Juneau, but are dedicated to serve Alaska's rural areas throughout the state. Termination of these positions will result in approximately 500 families per year going without access to justice.

With the continued support of the private bar, the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault's pro bono program, as well as the Volunteer Attorney Support Program at ALSC, will continue to recruit volunteer private attorneys to donate their time for pro bono representation of victims of domestic violence. This, however, will not compensate for the loss of ALSC's three domestic violence attorneys.

For 39 years, ALSC has responded to the civil legal needs of low-income Alaskans who would otherwise go without legal assistance. ALSC will soon be launching its "Robert Hickerson Partners in Justice Campaign" to encourage donations from Alaskan attorneys. Additional information is available at www.alsc-law.org.

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