



**PRESS RELEASE  
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**Divisiveness At the Worst Time**

*“Core Legal Service Providers” Make a Grab for Legal Services Funding*

**Madison, WI** – In a craven political maneuver, a self-anointed group of “core legal services providers” submitted a Memo to the Joint Finance Committee, crafted by a hired consultant, in a deceptive move to monopolize scarce legal services funding for low income people in Wisconsin. Wisconsin’s self-proclaimed “core legal service providers” proposed eliminating the role of WisTAF, a major funder of legal services for low income people in Wisconsin, and instead propose creating a “10% solution” to restore legal services funding to the budget, but directly appropriate *ALL* of the money to themselves. The “core providers,” **Legal Action of Wisconsin, Disability Rights Wisconsin, Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Judicare** reacted to Governor Walker’s budget bill that eliminates indigent civil legal services in the Department of Administration budget. “The so called ‘core providers’ insult the Wisconsin Trust Account Fund, the current trustees of indigent civil legal service funding, the State Bar of Wisconsin, and the countless other public interest attorneys working tirelessly to address the overwhelming legal needs of Wisconsin’s diverse population,” said Bobby Peterson Public Interest Attorney at ABC for Health, Inc.

“The proposal is unconscionable, short-sighted, unbelievably self-serving and above all else, divisive at time when we need collaboration to confront the foes of legal services funding for the poor,” noted Peterson. “Instead of working collaboratively with the broader legal service community to help preserve these small but vital state funds, the self anointed “core providers” break from WisTAF and the legal services community and employ eerily familiar bully tactics to self-preserve at the expense of smaller agencies. This brazen tactic is both foolish and another embarrassment for Wisconsin, continues Peterson.” The memo is available online by this link:

<http://www.safetyweb.org/common/AllianceCLSJFCmemoApril2011.pdf>

Peterson doesn’t accept the premise that other service providers are unnecessary. “ABC provides unduplicated statewide services to low-income clients across the spectrum of both public and private health coverage issues. Since 1994 we effectively served thousands of clients throughout Wisconsin. says Peterson. “Unduplicated legal services are also provided by other agencies cut out from the funds such as Community Justice, Inc., AIDS Network, Catholic Charities, and countless others.”

*ABC for Health, Inc. is a Wisconsin-based, nonprofit, public interest law firm dedicated to linking children and families, particularly those with special health care needs, to health care benefits and services. ABC for Health’s mission is to provide information, advocacy tools, legal services and expert support needed to obtain, maintain, and finance health care coverage and services.*