

## Gates Foundation Donates Millions to Legal Aid of Washington

By Christine Cristiano

Thanks to a generous donation from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, legal aid offices in Washington will get some much needed financial relief.



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Over the next three years, the foundation has pledged to donate over \$4 million to be shared with various community based foundations, libraries and the 26 non-profit legal aid offices in the state of Washington. Legal aid provides free legal service to low income residents and will receive approximately \$3 million of the grant.

Due to the downturn in the economy, Legal Aid offices have experienced a marked increase in clientele who cannot afford legal representation regarding foreclosures, domestic violence, and evictions, resulting in a financial strain on the organization. Legal Aid is funded through interest accounts that are held in trust by attorneys for their clients. According to The Legal Aid for Washington, a decrease in interest rates and various other factors combined contributed to the 80 percent drop in funds.

In addition, according to press release last week, the foundation announced that Kate James will serve as its chief communications officer and also serve as senior communications advisor to the foundation's co-chairs and executive team. Previously, James held the position of senior vice president for global corporate communications with Citibank.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's mandate "seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life." Globally, the foundation "focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty" in developing countries.

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