

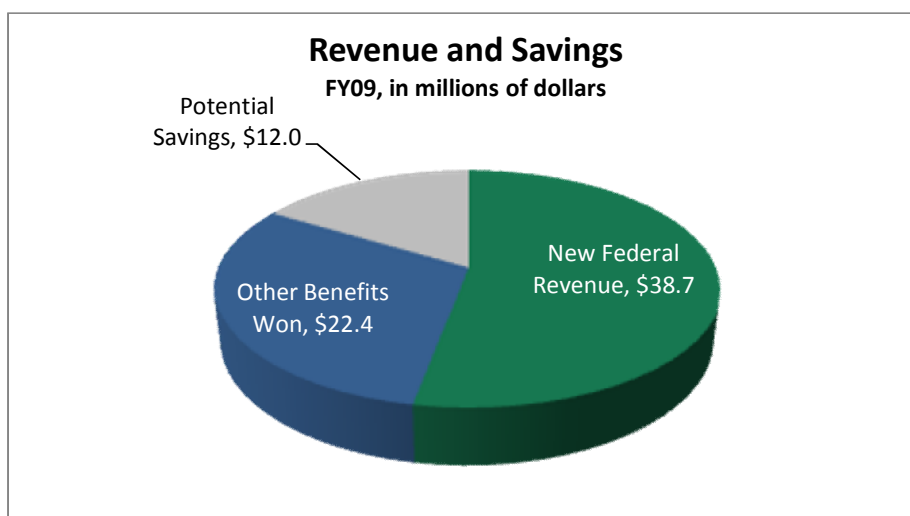
## Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

### **Economic Benefits of Civil Legal Aid: How Legal Aid Boosted the Commonwealth's Economy in FY09**

#### **Summary**

Full report at [www.mlac.org/research.html](http://www.mlac.org/research.html)

The work of legal aid programs funded by the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation brings in millions of federal dollars each year, wins millions more in financial support for low-income Massachusetts residents and saves the state the expense of costly social services. In FY09, the total boost to the Commonwealth's economy amounted to an estimated \$73.1 million.



#### **New Federal Revenue Brought into the Commonwealth: \$38.7 million**

- **SSI/SSDI: \$9.1 million**  
MLAC's Disability Benefits Project, with state funding of only \$1.37 million, yielded \$8,449,788 in retroactive payments and first-year federal benefits to clients and \$666,037 in direct federal reimbursements to the Commonwealth. Average recipient receives benefits for 9.7 years.
- **SNAP (Food Stamps): \$26.7 million**  
Policy changes spearheaded by the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute were responsible for bringing an additional \$26,675,664 in federal Food Stamps to the Commonwealth.
- **Medicare Appeals: \$1.1 million**  
Clients of MLAC's Medicare Advocacy Project won \$1,091,484 in Medicare coverage of health care costs.
- **Medicaid Waiver: \$1.25 million**  
Massachusetts Advocates for Children's lead advocacy for the Children's Autism Medicaid waiver resulted in \$1.25 million in federal Medicaid reimbursements.
- **Federal Taxes: \$554,641**  
Greater Boston Legal Services and Neighborhood Legal Services provided federal tax appeal and preparation assistance, bringing in \$554,641 to low-income clients.

- **Additional Revenue from Federal Extended Unemployment Benefits\***  
Two MLAC-funded programs, Greater Boston Legal Services and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, successfully advocated for changes to Massachusetts law that made the Commonwealth eligible for an estimated **\$650 million** in federal extended unemployment benefits.

#### **Other Benefits Won for Low-Income Residents: \$22.4 million**

- **Unemployment Insurance: \$2.8 million**  
Low-income workers represented by MLAC-funded programs won an estimated \$2.8 million in unemployment benefit appeals.
- **Housing Stabilization: \$482,627**  
Low-income households received \$482,627 in rent relief and damages as a result of representation by Community Legal Services and Counseling Center and Neighborhood Legal Services.
- **Low-Income Utility Discounts: \$18.5 million**  
Advocacy by the National Consumer Law Center resulted in an increase in the value of discount utility rates, saving low-income Massachusetts households approximately \$12 million on their utility bills, and an expansion of income eligibility for the discount rate, valued at approximately \$6.5 million per year. NCLC's Massachusetts work is funded by MLAC.
- **Child Support Orders: \$666,952**  
South Coastal Counties Legal Services and the Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts reported a combined total of 106 child support orders won, with an average payment of \$121 per week in FY09. This amounts to income of approximately \$666,952 per year for low-income custodial parents and their children.

#### **Potential Savings for the Commonwealth: \$12 million**

- **Preventing homelessness: \$8.4 million**  
MLAC estimates an additional cost savings to the Commonwealth of \$8,403,525 from legal assistance that kept low-income families in their homes and out of the costly emergency shelter system.
- **Domestic Violence Prevention: \$3.6 million**  
MLAC estimates that its Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project saved the Commonwealth \$3,573,000 in medical and court costs by preventing further assaults on clients.

In FY09 new revenues for civil legal aid clients and cost savings to the Commonwealth won by legal aid totaled an estimated **\$73.1 million**. Of this amount, **\$38.7 million was in the form of new federal revenue**. The state appropriation for MLAC in FY09 was only \$11.1 million.

*\*Because it is difficult to quantify legal services' impact in achieving the unemployment extension, this benefit is not included in total figures.*