



THE LAWYERS'
CAMPAIGN for EQUAL JUSTICE

From the desk
of Jeff Barker
Jeff Barker

Vote YES on HB 4143

Use unclaimed tortfeasor damages to fund access to justice

- **HB 4143 will bring Oregon into line with most other states to ensure that uncollected amounts from class action judgments and settlements are put to good public purpose use, rather than returned to the tortfeasor.**
- **HB 4143 would make Oregon the 12th state to make good public purpose use of such funds by directing them to support the provision of free legal assistance to provide access to justice for low income Oregonians.**
- **Oregon's legal aid programs play a critical role in the justice system by providing access to justice on a broad range of issues, including domestic violence which comprises 40% of legal aid's cases.**
- **HB 4143 would have a particularly powerful impact on domestic violence victims in Oregon.**
 - A 2003 study found that the availability of legal services significantly reduces the likelihood that an individual will be battered.
 - Low income people seeking civil legal assistance with domestic violence issues, on average, need help with seven substantive legal issues, more than three times the average of other Oregonians.
 - Victims often need legal help to navigate our complex justice system to help them stay safe from violence and maintain housing and employment. Too many go without help.
 - Access to civil legal assistance for survivors is identified as a top unmet need for survivors by key informants responding to the 2013 Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women statewide survey, the 2013 Oregon Violence Against Women statewide survey, and the 2012 National Network to End Violence Against Women census survey.
- **Legal services attorneys help victims and communities address an array of complex civil legal issues:**
 - Legal services attorneys provide direct legal services to help victims and their children get and stay safe from abuse.
 - Legal services attorneys work closely with courts, district attorneys, law enforcement, and domestic violence shelters in local and statewide efforts to strengthen the coordinated community response to domestic and sexual violence.
- **Domestic violence in Oregon is a major public health and safety issue.** In a 2001 survey of Oregon women age 20-55, nearly one-third reported that they had experienced violent victimization during the five years preceding the survey. Since 2009, there have been more than 150 domestic violence related deaths in Oregon, including at least 10 children.
- **Access to civil legal services reduces domestic violence, strengthens families and creates opportunity for long term safety and self-sufficiency.**

For the above reasons, CEJ respectfully urges your YES vote on HB 4143