Indiana Legal Services, Inc. (ILS) was awarded a $10,000 Pro Bono Grant from the American College of Bankruptcy Foundation (ACBF) to increase the capacity of its staff in Northern Indiana to handle bankruptcy cases and to empower private attorneys in the area to use bankruptcy as a tool to rehabilitate the financial health of targeted populations. A special focus will be directed towards assisting armed service veterans, ex-offenders reentering their communities and seniors.

"With the declining manufacturing base in Northern Indiana adversely affecting the financial health of many families in the area," said Jon Laramore, the ILS Executive Director, "it is important for the ILS legal team to be well equipped to help struggling families re-organize their lives in a way that respects their obligations but does not destroy their self-sufficiency. Bankruptcy is one important tool in our toolkit."

"We, at ILS, very much appreciate this support from an organization that enjoys an excellent reputation," added Laramore.

The American College of Bankruptcy Foundation, based in Stanardsville, Virginia, provides pro bono grants annually to legal services organizations to encourage legal assistance to poor and disadvantaged people, to encourage pro bono legal work and to educate the public on their rights and obligations under the bankruptcy statutes. The Foundation is the largest financial supporter of bankruptcy and insolvency-related pro bono legal service programs in the United States.

Grant funds will be used to support an ILS attorney who will train his cohorts in Merrillville and in South Bend on the best practices for handling bankruptcy matters. This attorney also will train private attorneys who work with military service veterans, seniors and ex-offenders who want to reenter the community. The project will seek to collaborate the area’s two pro bono districts (District A in Hobart, District B in South Bend) and its two law schools at the University of Notre Dame and at Valparaiso University.

ILS is the state’s largest poverty, not-for-profit law firm, providing free legal assistance and representation to financially eligible clients in all 92 Indiana counties on a wide variety of civil legal issues. It has staff operating from eight branch offices located in Bloomington, Evansville, Fort Wayne,
Indianapolis, Lafayette, Merrillville, New Albany and South Bend. The not-for-profit firm offers specialized legal services through projects and centers like the Consumer Law Center, the Housing Law Center, the Military Assistance Project, the Senior Law Project, the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic, the Community/Economic Development Project, the Homeless Legal Project, the Medical-Legal Partnerships, the Immigrants’ and Language Rights Center and the Migrant Farmworker Law Center. ILS has partnerships with the Indiana Pro Bono Commission and its district coordinators, the state’s five law schools and many social service providers.

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