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FOR RELEASE AT WILL

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LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY PRESIDENT STEPPING DOWN

EDISON — The five-decade career of Melville D. Miller Jr. as president and chief counsel of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) is coming to an end.

Miller has informed the LSNJ Board of Trustees and staff that he will step aside, effective next summer, as the only CEO the organization has had since he was one of its incorporators in at the beginning of the 1970's.

Miller said the LSNJ Board of Trustees will be conducting a national search for his successor.

“It’s time to pass the torch,” he said. “All organizations, especially those in the public interest, at some point need new leadership to open up opportunities for fresh ideas, new light.

“For me, and for family and personal reasons as well, that time is now. This is entirely my own decision. I’ve loved guiding this organization. It’s been a major and fulfilling part of my life. LSNJ is at the strongest and most effective place in its history, so from an organizational perspective there cannot be a better time. We have a dedicated board, a solid core of experienced senior management, staff colleagues throughout with a steadfast commitment to helping those living in poverty confront their civil legal problems. Many of our senior attorneys and other staff are known statewide, and in numerous cases nationally, as the preeminent experts in their fields.

“Most importantly, of course, there still is much work to be done on behalf of the 3 million of our state’s residents who live in true poverty, barely getting by even though New Jersey is one of the richest in the nation. Before I leave, Legal Services of New Jersey will lay out a series of new reports assessing the current need for civil legal representation for those in poverty, and mapping routes and strategies for public officials to deal with poverty and the horrendous impact it has on generations to come.”

Cynthia M. Jacob, chairperson of the LSNJ board of trustees, praised Miller’s accomplishments, noting that in the world of legal aid organizations, Miller is viewed as an “icon.”

She said, “Despite the periodic times when some in the public realm sought to severely cut funding for Legal Services and limit its scope, De Miller stood fast as a stalwart in keeping Legal Services alive and strong in New Jersey, always while still providing crucial legal help for people in poverty. He has helped New Jerseyans far better understand the depths and consequences of poverty in our state.”

During Miller’s tenure Legal Services has provided legal representation in 2.5 million civil legal cases, on behalf of more than 8 million state residents unable to afford lawyers on their own.

After Miller steps down as president in mid-2020, he intends to still be involved in certain key areas of Legal Services work.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state’s Legal Services system, a network of six independent non-profit corporations that has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people in all 21 counties for more than 54 years.

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