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**FOR RELEASE AT WILL**

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**LATEST LEGAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER FOCUSES  
ON HELP PAYING ENERGY BILLS AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS**

EDISON — The latest newsletter of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) focuses on the various programs in New Jersey designed to help poor people pay their gas and electric bills, as well as detailing protections under the state’s Whistleblower Act for workers reporting illegal acts of their employers.

The bilingual publication, “Looking Out For Your Legal Rights,” may be viewed online at [www.lsnjlaw.org](http://www.lsnjlaw.org) and also is available at all Legal Services offices in New Jersey.

There essentially are three key energy assistance programs: The Universal Service Fund, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Lifeline Energy Assistance Program.

All provide varying but substantial financial assistance for energy bill payments. Eligibility for each of the programs also varies, but generally focuses on income levels, utility use and other factors of the individual or families applying for the benefits.

The LSNJ newsletter also spells out the broad protections for workers as well as independent contractors who become whistleblowers under New Jersey’s Conscientious Employee Protection Act. Workers who believe they have been the subject of retaliation for

reporting illegal acts of their employers have one year to file a lawsuit. If the suit is successful, there are considerable financial rewards, even recovery of attorney fees.

The newsletter notes there are other state and federal laws offering whistleblower protections.

Also included in the publication is information about the NJ Plan First program for people who exceed income limits for full Medicaid coverage, but meet the income eligibility guidelines for the Affordable Care Act. This new program provides family planning services and related supplies, including the so-called “morning after” pill.

Another section of the newsletter underscores that people who are self- employed, including those who qualify as independent contractors, must pay and file federal taxes, if their annual income is more than \$400.

*Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state’s Legal Services system, a network of six independent non-profit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people in all 21 counties for more than 54 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.4 million cases.*

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