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**FOR RELEASE AT WILL**

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**LEGAL SERVICES TO HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICE HONORING ITS PAST  
PRESIDENT, MELVILLE D. MILLER, JR.**

EDISON — Melville D. Miller, Jr., who died March 1, 2021 after serving nearly half a century as president of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), was widely recognized as a trailblazer in the world of legal aid organizations that protect the rights of the poor throughout the state, in Washington, DC, and across the nation.

“He was a hero to thousands and thousands of New Jerseyans,” said Gov. Phil Murphy when told of Miller’s death. “His great shadow was cast not only up and down our state but across the county. He did so much good for so many.”

As New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice Stuart J. Rabner put it, “Through his professionalism, passion, insight, and integrity, he made a meaningful difference in countless lives. He inspired all of us.”

On Wednesday, October 20, a memorial service celebrating the “life and legacy” of Miller, who was widely known as “De,” will be held at 10 a.m. in Patriot’s Theater at the War Memorial at One Memorial Drive, Trenton, near the rear of the Statehouse. Chief Justice Rabner will be among the many speakers to highlight Miller’s commitment to helping the poor, battling

against racism, and assisting and advising the courts, the Legal Services Corporation in Washington and other organizations.

The public is invited to attend the memorial service. Further details are available from Judith E. Long at [jlong@lsnj.org](mailto:jlong@lsnj.org)

In one of his many appearances in Trenton, Miller passionately laid out in straightforward terms precisely what Legal Services does and why it is so important:

“The Legal Services system offers at least one office in every county, ensuring ease and access for residents and responsiveness to local legal problems. Only the most vital legal matters are taken. That includes keeping families together and avoiding homelessness by fighting illegal evictions, maintaining senior couples in their modest homes in the face of imminent foreclosures based on predatory lending practices, protecting victims of domestic violence, helping recent graduates and their families deal with the crushing burden of unfair student debt, helping low-income families combat unscrupulous practices of slick commercial entities and lenders, and making sure those entitled to assistance from government programs designed to assist the state’s most vulnerable people actually receive the help they need. Put simply, Legal Services stands as the shield for the poor against homelessness, family breakup, unchecked hunger, physical safety and other conditions that a majority of New Jerseyans take for granted.”

The Tewksbury resident and 1969 Harvard Law School graduate was among the incorporators of Legal Services in 1971 and he was often described as the backbone and driving force of the organization. A man with a commanding presence, he could argue hard, but still laugh easily. Whether at a meeting or in the hallways, people knew when he was around and he almost always stopped to kibitz.

He had said his focus on helping the downtrodden and standing up for justice began really taking shape when as a young age he was sent to a family gathering in the south. There he was told to sit with whites in the front of the bus. He chose to sit in the back.

Dawn Miller, who succeeded him as president of LSNJ, perhaps summed up best his legacy in a single, encompassing sentence:

“He had a passion for fighting against injustice that was incomparable.”

***For information about complimentary parking and COVID-19 precautions at the Patriots Theater, or for instructions on viewing the livestream remotely, please email Judy Long at JLong@lsnj.org.***

*Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state’s Legal Services system, a network of six independent nonprofit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for more than 50 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.6 million cases.*

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