A Missouri Supreme Court case between a tenant and her landlord was decided in favor of the tenant, in a development advocates are hoping may be a sign that the tide is turning towards accountability for landlords.

Latasha Johnson's conflict with Kohner Properties started in 2015, when a leaky ceiling her landlord refused to repair collapsed into her bathtub. Johnson found herself staying at a motel at her own expense in order to take showers. When her landlord took her to court for refusing to pay rent, Johnson turned to Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM), which represents clients who cannot afford lawyers in a variety of civil cases.

Three years later, the highest court in Missouri handed down a verdict in Kohner Properties v. Latasha Johnson in favor of the appellant on July 3. Although the Circuit Court of St. Louis ruled in favor of Kohner Properties, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that Kohner was the first to violate its lease with Johnson when her apartment became uninhabitable.

The court established a new precedent that tenants have the right to refuse to pay rent if the living conditions in their property become unreasonable. It also ruled it should not be universally required that tenants pay their rent to the court to hold in custody until their case is decided.

Susan Alverson, co-manager of the Housing Law Project for LSEM, said the decision could be an important step towards changing the status quo for tenants’ rights in Missouri. “Kohner Properties did not uphold its end of the bargain by maintaining a safe, decent home for Ms. Johnson and her daughter,” Alverson said. “Landlords who do not keep dwellings habitable expect tenants to just give up because they cannot afford a lawyer. This means landlords continue to provide sub-standard housing to the next tenant.”

Dan Glazier, executive director and general counsel of LSEM, said it was a victory for tenants that the court ruled Johnson was justified in refusing to pay rent because of her apartments’ conditions. “There is no longer an absolute denial of tenants’ rights to withhold rent for sub-standard housing,” Glazier said. “While we prefer that our clients who are renters would never have to provide money to the court before they can legally challenge their landlord, this ruling is a step forward for renters’ rights to decent housing. Tenants can now fight back against deplorable conditions.”

The ruling comes in the midst of a housing situation in Missouri that LSEM refers to as a “crisis” for low-income renters. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 33 percent of the population of Missouri rents property. But there is a shortage of housing that is available to families with very low income—only 42 units available for every 100 households that need one. The cost of renting is also going up. Between 2014 and 2016, the cost of rent increased by 4.5 percent, according to America’s Community Survey.

When low-income renters come into conflict with their landlords, the odds are not in the renters’ favor. Since these cases are heard in civil court, tenants who cannot afford a lawyer are not provided with one by the courts, as criminal defendants are guaranteed. According to a Washington University School of Law report, only 2.7 percent of tenants who appeared in court between 2012 and 2016 had a lawyer.

Glazier said that without legal aid organizations like LSEM, Johnson would not have been able to take the case to the Supreme Court. “Protecting people like Ms. Johnson protects all of us from injustice,” Glazier said.
Autumn Stultz is a 33-year-old single mother who lives with her 10-year old daughter and her mother. She has multiple medical conditions, including asthma, thyroid disease, and anxiety.

Prior to the expansion of Medicaid, Autumn could only get very limited healthcare coverage through the Uninsured Women’s Health Services program. She could not afford her monthly asthma medication at $90, or the $160 to visit a doctor, so her asthma went untreated and she had to be hospitalized. With no way to pay several thousand dollars of medical bills, the hospital sued her.

Autumn met the eligibility requirements for Medicaid expansion under the Missouri Constitution. However, the State’s failure to implement the program meant that she had no way to manage her chronic health conditions and resorted to using emergency care.

Autumn and two other brave women became plaintiffs in the Doyle v. Tidball case in 2021 to ensure Medicaid expansion coverage was available for Autumn and 275,000 other Missourians.

“I was happy and relieved that the Supreme Court said that the state must provide healthcare to me and others like me! I am happy that they listened to me, and other Missourians who voted to expand Medicaid,” Autumn remarked.

As a result of this successful lawsuit, Autumn can now regularly see a doctor for the ongoing medical care she needs to avoid expensive hospitalization.

“It is so important for me to have access to healthcare because I have so many members of my family who rely on me, including my daughter and my mom,” said Autumn. “I need to be healthy to take care of myself and my family.”

She is proud that her story could help make a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of others who rely on Medicaid for lifesaving and lifechanging healthcare.
In August 2020, Missouri voters approved a statewide referendum to enact the Medicaid expansion provision of the Affordable Care Act. As a result, approximately 275,000 more low-income Missourians would become eligible for Medicaid health coverage.

In May 2021, in opposition to the will of voters, the Missouri Department of Social Services refused to implement the Medicaid expansion, claiming the state legislature had not authorized funding for expansion of services. This decision denied access to the Missouri Medicaid coverage mandated by the State Constitution.

In response to the State’s failure to expand Medicaid eligibility, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, along with law firm partners Stinson LLP and Husch Blackwell LLP, filed the Doyle v. Tidball case on behalf of three low-income women who met the eligibility criteria for the new Medicaid expansion, but were denied coverage.

On August 10, 2021, following the appeal of an unfavorable trial court ruling, the Missouri Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision in favor of the plaintiffs, thus requiring the Missouri Department of Social Services to comply with the state constitutional requirement to expand eligibility for Medicaid coverage.

As a result of Legal Services’ advocacy and partnership with the legal community in this landmark case, approximately 275,000 Missourians will have access to health care through Medicaid, often for the first time ever, giving both access to immediate life-saving treatment and also preventative care that will improve their health outcomes and save millions of dollars in the long-term.
Dear Friends,

Last November, as we gathered to celebrate Legal Services’ 65th Anniversary, we noted:

**Justice for All** is a work in progress and remains a goal to strive for. Legal Services is looking to the future and working to make this goal a reality for more of our citizens. We are building on the past and using the lessons learned, to meet the present and emerging crises facing our communities.

Today, we are pleased to report that 2021 was a year of moving Equal Justice forward.

While celebrating our past, we were also making history through landmark achievements such as the case to secure Medicaid Expansion, which will bring access to healthcare to 275,000 Missourians.

In addition, we expanded our work protecting families from evictions during the depths of the pandemic and helped clients access vital resources through food stamps and unemployment benefits.

We also developed an ambitious Strategic Plan for the next 5 years, which expands our reach into the community to serve more people in more ways.

Throughout our social justice journey over the past 65 years, we have always worked closely in collaboration with our extraordinary network of community partners, the legal community, our supporters and those we serve. As we look ahead, we know there is much to be done to achieve the precious goal of equal opportunity for all and we embrace these partnerships to help us achieve that goal.

We pledge to continue to strive to meet the considerable challenges that so many of our neighbors still face. Thank you for your partnership with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri yesterday, today and tomorrow as this work goes forward.

Gratefully,

Daniel K. Glazier
Executive Director & General Counsel

Hon. T. Bennett “Ben” Burkemper
President, Board of Directors

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**Our Mission**

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri advances justice through legal representation, education and supportive services. We partner with the community to improve lives, promote fairness and create opportunities for those in need.
New Initiatives in 2021

Legal Services expanded programs and services to meet the needs of those impacted by COVID.

**Senior Law Program expands:**
The Senior Law Program helps clients 60+ with a range of civil legal issues, including housing, consumer law, public benefits, basic estate planning and more. In 2021, Legal Services helped 808 clients and families age 60 or older.

A new three-year grant from the St. Louis Senior Fund helped underwrite the hiring of a full-time Senior Law attorney. Other grants provide funding for services for the elderly in all of Legal Services’ 21 counties. (Northeast Area Agency on Aging, St. Louis Area Agency on Aging, and Aging Ahead)

**Assistance with unemployment benefits:**
Amidst high rates of unemployment due to COVID, the Volunteer Lawyers Program organized pro bono assistance to help clients with appeals of denials for unemployment benefits after the State erroneously demanded that recipients pay back federal unemployment benefits.

**Eviction Prevention:**
With the expiration of the Federal Eviction Moratoria, thousands of families were at imminent risk of homelessness. Legal Services secured new grants to hire additional staff to help families avoid evictions.

As part of the eviction prevention work, Legal Services also addressed the issue of utility shut-offs, which can lead to evictions and homelessness. As part of a community coalition, Legal Services advocated for a settlement that increased funding for Spire’s Payment Partner Program to help low-income customers with past due bills and arrears.

**New Strategic Plan: 2021-2026**
The four guiding priorities are:

- Centering the mission and vision with an emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion to advance systemic change around social and racial justice in eastern Missouri.
- Expanding comprehensive legal services and systemic advocacy to improve the lives of clients and communities, and to advance social and racial justice.
- Providing quality, holistic legal services by enhancing staff experience and program effectiveness.
- Developing resources to expand services to clients and the communities we serve.
2021 Service Statistics

96% of clients live at or below 200% of federal poverty level

77% of clients are women

59% of clients served are BIPOC

50% of those served are children

28% of cases involved domestic violence

15,660+ Requests for help

9,600 People served through direct client work

27,800 More people assisted through community education, outreach, court helpdesk and referrals

96% Success rate for cases completed

$4,800,000 Monetary benefits gained for clients.

The Justice Gap:
Nationwide, about 80% of low-income people do not get the legal aid they need.

Types of Issues Solved

Immigration and other issues 28%

Housing 28%

Family Law/Abuse & Neglect 28%

Healthcare 14%

Public Benefits 9%

Community Economic Development 8%

Consumer 6%

Education 3%

37,400 Served
Eddie Fondren is a 77-year-old Vietnam Veteran on a fixed income. In late August 2021, he received notice from his long-time landlord that his house had been sold.

Shortly afterwards, the new property manager informed him that his rent would be increased by more than 30% and that he had four days to pay or be evicted. The new landlord also failed to address any of Mr. Fondren’s concerns about repairs needed to the property.

“They wanted to increase my rent to $940 a month but my social security income is not much over $1,000,” Mr. Fondren said. “I couldn’t pay that! I knew it wasn’t right, but didn’t know what to do about it,” he remarked.

This sudden rent increase was illegal and Mr. Fondren struggled to pay it. By November, the landlord had filed for eviction and that’s when he contacted Legal Services of Eastern Missouri.

Latasha Barnes, attorney with the Senior Law Program, represented Mr. Fondren to prevent his eviction. Latasha and other Legal Services’ staff worked with his current property managers to get him additional time while they worked with community partners to find him a new home.

By March 2022, Mr. Fondren was able to relocate to a new home he could afford, and the eviction lawsuit was dismissed without prejudice.

“Latasha stuck with me all the way through and she referred me to people that helped me find a new apartment. She even came to help me move. I’m really grateful for what Legal Services did for me,” Mr. Fondren stated.

Thanks to grants from agencies including Aging Ahead, Northeast Missouri Area Agency on Aging, St. Louis Area Agency on Aging, and the St. Louis City Senior Fund, clients like Mr. Fondren get the help they need to prevent eviction and homelessness through Legal Services’ Senior Law Program.
In 2021, more than 18,554 hours of volunteer time were donated, with a value of more than one million dollars! This commitment is extraordinary and we are truly grateful for every single volunteer who gives their time to support our mission and our clients!

Young Friends of Legal Services

In 2021, the Young Friends of Legal Services adapted to pandemic needs by hosting their most popular CLE seminar to date via Zoom. More than 100 young lawyers registered for this CLE focusing on Guardianships and Powers of Attorney. As a result, several attorneys joined Legal Services’ Volunteer Lawyers Program to provide pro bono help for clients needing help with guardianships and/or Powers of Attorney.

At the end of 2021, Michael Cherba handed over leadership to new President Ryan Turnage, who thanked Mike for his leadership during the past three years.

President: Ryan Turnage
Vice President: Nino Przulj
Secretary: Ericka Simpson-Conner
Board Members: Michael Cherba, Katie Fechte, Laura Halfmann-Morris, Lucus Jackson, Elizabeth Lenivy, Sarah Lowe, Loren Menefee, Joel Ocampo, Vannah Shaw, Bola Adeniran, Keegan Shea, Rose Tanner
Community Outreach

By the numbers:

Legal Services meets clients where they live, work and in their home communities to provide easy access to information, legal clinics and training for our community partners. Community outreach and partnerships with other agencies help to educate members of the public about their legal rights, and how to access a wide range of available community services. These events play a vital role in expanding access to justice to families and communities.

**WORKSHOPS/CLINICS**
- 31 sessions
- 354 attended

**LEGAL EDUCATION FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS**
- 44 sessions
- 498 attended

**COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**
- 112 sessions
- 3661 attended

**OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS**
- 77 sessions
- 4604 attended

**TOTAL OUTREACH SESSIONS IN 2021**
- 264

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED**
- 9,117
Landmark Cases

1985

Graham v. Schoemehl,
Filed against St. Louis City on behalf of 18 homeless residents, this case resulted in a consent decree that led to the establishment of a network of homeless services providers.

1990-1992

Southside Welfare Rights v. Stangler
Enforced the right to expedited (emergency) food stamps for the lowest income Missourians and their right to file an application for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps).

1993-1996

ROWEL v. Stangler
Challenged Missouri’s failure to provide non-emergency medical transportation, as one of only three states not providing such transportation. The settlement resulted in Missouri adopting a Non-Emergency Medical Transport program that is still available today to nearly a million Missouri Medicaid recipients.
Since its founding in 1956, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri has provided services to more than 1.1 million clients. The impact is even higher, helping millions of Missourians through cases that expand access to justice across the state.

**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Missouri v. Angoff**
Challenged the conversion of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Missouri to for-profit status and led to the establishment of the Missouri Foundation for Health, funded with the Blue Cross Blue Shield funds. The Foundation is currently one of the largest health foundations in the country and provides support for programs statewide.

**JEM v. Kinkade**
Resulted in a change in State policy to allow all Medicaid patients access to life-saving drugs that can cure chronic Hepatitis C.

**S.C. et. al. v. Riverview Gardens School District and Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education et.al.**
Resulted in a Consent Decree under which Missouri school districts will enroll homeless students and provide transportation and support services. Under the settlement, federal courts can monitor statewide implementation of the consent decree for three years.
In 2021, Legal Services cautiously resumed annual fundraising events including the For The Common Good Awards luncheon and a special 65th Anniversary gala edition of Justice Speaks.

The 2021 For The Common Good Awards luncheon honored nine volunteers and community partners for outstanding commitment to preserving equal access to justice. Awardees included: Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, Jama Dodson of Saint Louis MHB, Jenna Hueneger, Carla Maley, Priscilla Murray, Mike Nepple, True Title Company and Wells Fargo.

The third annual Justice Speaks event included a 65th Anniversary Gala this year. 250+ guests enjoyed dinner and a keynote address by national civil rights advocate Ben Jealous.

The two events raised more than $163,000 to help fund the mission of Action. Justice. Hope.

We extend a special thank you to all our sponsors and supporters, as listed in the following pages.
Services

Individual Rights

**Consumer Law**
Represents clients with creditor/debtor problems, victims of deceptive business practices or predatory lending and student loan defaults.

**Education Justice**
Provides information about students’ rights and advocates for students facing unfair discipline.

**Public Benefits**
Helps with applications and appeals for public benefit programs, including Medicaid, TANF, food stamps and Social Security.

**Senior Law**
Represents clients 60 years of age or older with a range of services.

Health

**Access to Health Coverage**
Connecting Kids to Coverage helps uninsured children and families enroll in health insurance plans.

**Advocates for Family Health**
Helps pregnant women and families with children with Medicaid managed care.

**Legal Advocacy for Adults with Mental Illness**
Assists adults with serious mental illness with a variety of legal matters.

Families

**Children’s Legal Alliance**
Provides advocacy for children with special education needs and homeless children.

**Parental Justice**
Representing parents in dependency cases for the reunification of families in St. Louis County Family Court. (Located in the St. Louis County Court Building)

**Lasting Solutions Family Law**
Helps survivors of domestic violence and their families achieve safety and stability.

**Youth and Family Advocacy**
Serves homeless and vulnerable youth and families in St. Louis County and City.

Communities

**Community Economic Development - Microenterprise**
Provides legal assistance and education for low-income entrepreneurs and community nonprofits.

**Community Economic Development - Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative**
Provides community development services addressing blighted and vacant housing in St. Louis City neighborhoods.

**Housing Law**
Assists with landlord/tenant issues, eviction, utilities, and other housing problems.

**Immigration Law**
Assists immigrants with residency and citizenship and serves victims of human trafficking.

**Special Projects**
Providing legal assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS in the St. Louis metro area, with funding from the St. Louis City’s Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Act funding.

**Volunteer Lawyers**
Provides pro bono opportunities for attorneys and law firms to help clients.

Regional Offices

**Hannibal Office**
Provides a full range of legal services to qualified low-income residents in thirteen Northeast Missouri counties (Adair, Clark, Knox, Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Pike, Ralls, Schuyler, Scotland, Shelby).

**Union Office**
Provides a full range of legal services to qualified low-income residents in five Missouri counties (Franklin, Lincoln, Montgomery, Warren and Washington).
# 2021 Financial Statement

## Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Grants</td>
<td>$6,795,825</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundation Grants</td>
<td>$1,759,326</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$1,051,674</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donated Services*</td>
<td>$1,043,471</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>$155,955</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$265,415**</td>
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**Total:** $11,071,666

## Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$1,349,493</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$379,748</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** $10,302,053

## Balance Sheet Information

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Net Assets as per year end:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$13,990,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>$14,760,424</td>
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*Includes the values of donated Pro Bono services.

**Includes Program Revenues, Investment Income and Miscellaneous.

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri is a grantee of the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) and complies with all LSC conditions and prohibitions in the acceptance of all funds. Legal Services of Eastern Missouri’s 2021 independent auditor’s report is available at [www.lsem.org/about/financial-and-tax-info/](http://www.lsem.org/about/financial-and-tax-info/).
Legal Services of Eastern Missouri depends on gifts, grants and contributions for most of its income. Thank you to the following donors for supporting our work and providing Action. Justice. Hope.

Below is a list of general donations and grants received in 2021. Please accept our apologies for any errors or omissions, and thank you to the many donors not listed here, who also play an important part in helping us fulfil our commitment to the community.

### CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, OTHER ENTITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Donor Description</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| $100,000+ | Legal Services Corporation  
Missouri Basic Civil Legal Services Fund  
Missouri Department of Social Services  
Missouri Foundation for Health  
Missouri IOLTA Fund  
St. Louis City Affordable Housing Trust Fund  
St. Louis City Department of Health and Human Services  
St. Louis Economic Development Partnership  
St. Louis Mental Health Board  
St. Louis Port Authority  
United Way of Greater St. Louis  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
U.S. Department of Justice |
| $50,000 - $99,999 | Aging Ahead  
Missouri Housing Development Commission  
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)  
St. Louis Community Foundation  
St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund  
St. Louis Development Corporation |
| $20,000 - $49,999 | Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.  
Citi  
Equal Justice Works  
Franklin County Area United Way  
Sandcastle Foundation  
Stanford University |
| $10,000 - $19,999 | Association of Corporate Counsel - St. Louis  
Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP  
AJ Bitker Charitable Foundation  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
Commerce Bancshares Foundation  
Community Builders Network  
Equal Justice America Inc.  
Franciscan Sisters of Mary  
Franklin County Community Resource Board  
Goldstein Family Foundation  
Missouri Department of Public Safety  
Montgomery Area United Way  
Stanley & Lucy Lopata Charitable Foundation  
St. Louis Bar Foundation  
STLRB Family Foundation  
The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis  
The Bar Plan Mutual Insurance Co.  
Third Wheel Brewing  
United Way of the Mark Twain Area  
University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law |
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Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale, P.C.  
Polsinelli PC  
Sandberg, Phoenix & von Gontard, P.C.  
USA&M Midwest, Inc. |
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Jacobson Press PC  
Gallagher Davis, LLP  
Brown & Brown  
Hergoz Crebs LLP  
Law Office of John S. Wallach, P.C.  
Ryan R. Cox and Associates, L.L.C.  
Voytas Law LLC  
Williams Dirks Dameron LLC |
| $259 - $999 | Wolfgram & Associates, PC  
Lieser Law Firm, LLC  
SWMM Law, LLC  
McDonnell & McDonnell  
Baker Sterchi Cowden Rice LLC  
Martin, Malec & Leopold, P.C.  
Ponder-Bates Stewart Law Offices, LLC  
Roberts, Wooten & Zimmer, L.L.C. |

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Mr. Ryan Furniss
Ms. Arin Smith and Mr. Travis
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Ms. Sara Wade
Mr. John L. Walker
Mr. R. Randall Wang
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Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Winn
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Commissioner Anne-Marie Clarke
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Missouri Primary Care Association
Dan Glazier, Joel Ferber & Susie Alversen
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