



**DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE**  
**Sharon F. Greisz**  
**Director of Finance**

February 21, 2008

To: Lonnie R. Robbins  
Chief Administrative Officer

From: Sharon F. Greisz  
Director of Finance

**Re: SAO No. 9**

I hereby certify that funds are unencumbered and available for transfer as follows:

**FROM:**

051-490-8903-1000-0607	Grants Fund Contingency	\$ 9,100
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**TO:**

051-210-0109-2000-0607	Circuit Court – Law Library Grant – Self Help Center	\$ 9,100
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**TESTIMONY OF HOWARD COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT**  
**Supplementary Budget & Appropriation Ordinance**  
**No. 9 – Fiscal 2008**

The Circuit Court for Howard County is requesting County Council approval for a supplementary appropriation from the County Grants Fund, Contingency Reserve for \$9,100. The source of the funds is a grant from the Maryland State Law Library and the funds will be used to purchase a collection of self-help materials, to pay for advertising and equipment costs, and to provide five hours a week of legal assistance to walk-in self-represented litigants.

**Background:**

The Howard County Law Library is open to the public on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Library has four computers which are available to the public and all have internet access. Three of those computers have access to an online legal database. The Law Librarian is available to assist patrons during the open Library hours.

The Maryland State Law Library annually awards grants designed to assist county law libraries in reaching a common acceptable level of service. The funds are provided each year through an annual appropriation from the Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Grant funds are only available to county law libraries that are open to the public. Funds may be used for any purpose which directly benefits the library and its users. Acceptable uses include items such as: the purchase of publications or subscriptions that supplement library collections; the purchase of office machinery, such as copiers, printers, or computers; library personnel salaries; and carpeting, furniture, or other design elements. Grant funds may not be used for any purpose which does not directly benefit the library or its users.

**Current Request:**

Through this grant, the Howard County Law Library plans to effectively respond to the growing national trend of litigants representing themselves. Law libraries provide an excellent environment to offer legal aids and to deliver legal information to self-represented litigants. The grant will help the Library support the increasing legal research needs of self-represented litigants by offering an extensive collection of self-help legal materials. A portion of the grant will be utilized for advertising efforts to make the public aware that a new self-help collection exists. Additionally, with the ability to pay attorneys at a reduced rate for five hours of weekly legal assistance, the Law Library will become more of an invaluable resource to self-represented litigants.

It is anticipated that Law Library grant funds will also be available for fiscal year 2009, and the Circuit Court plans to apply for and receive funding from the State to incorporate in next year's County budget for the purposes of continuing to provide contractual legal assistance to walk-in self-represented litigants. The self-help center concept will be a pilot program that will be evaluated on an on-going basis over the next year.

Appropriation of these State grant funds by the County Council will help self-represented litigants to meet their legal research needs at the Howard County Law Library. The costs to provide this service will require no outlay of County funds. The Circuit Court appreciates the consideration by the County Council of this supplementary appropriation ordinance.