



Legal Aid Justice Center staff receive voluntary recognition, become first unionized legal aid in Virginia

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VIRGINIA – Workers at the Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) have officially formed a union. On Wednesday, March 25, 2026, the union was voluntarily recognized by management, representing more than 70 employees.

This historic progress reflects “a shared commitment to open communication, collaboration, and ensuring that everyone’s voice has a meaningful place in shaping our workplace,” according to an email from the Organizing Committee to newly unionized members.

With voluntary recognition, companies acknowledge their employees’ desire rather than fighting to stop workers from exercising their rights. The process of voluntary recognition is typically faster and less contentious than formal election procedure overseen by the National Labor Relations Board. The Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) management team agreed to a third-party neutral card check process confirming the will of the overwhelming majority of Legal Aid Justice Center employees.

Together, the union and LAJC will ensure that LAJC management is accountable to frontline staff—including administrative, communications, and fundraising staff; attorneys; community organizers; and paralegals—and maintains clear communication with all of whom serve low-income communities across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

“The Legal Aid Justice Center is proud to become the first unionized legal aid in Virginia,” said Angela Ciolfi, LAJC’s executive director. “Empowering workers has been a core value of LAJC throughout our nearly 60 years of advocacy. We’re proud to stand with our staff and with the Guild, and we look forward to building something great together.”

LAJC union members look forward to working with the management team to collectively bargain and continue to make the Legal Aid Justice Center a model of effective community service and the kind of workplace where everyone’s work is validated. LAJC is a nationally-recognized provider of civil legal services. LAJC partners with community members to dismantle the systems that create and perpetuate poverty. Supporting workers’ rights is a foundational component of advocating for justice and dignity for Virginia’s underserved communities.

The Washington Baltimore News Guild, Local 32035 of the Communications Workers of America is proud to work with The Virginia Legal Aid Justice Center on a better future for all the communities of Virginia.

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ABOUT THE LEGAL AID JUSTICE CENTER UNION

The Legal Aid Justice Center Union represents administrative, communications, and fundraising staff, attorneys, community organizers, and paralegals at the Virginia-based non-profit organization which provides legal services and advocacy to low income individuals. The union received voluntary recognition in March 2026.

ABOUT THE WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE NEWS GUILD

The Washington-Baltimore News Guild, Local 32035 of The NewsGuild-Communications Workers of America, the union for more than 3,000 news, information, nonprofit and labor organization workers in the mid-Atlantic and beyond, including the Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, AFL-CIO, Environmental Defense Fund and the American Nurses Association (ANA). Together, we hold our employers accountable and ensure that our workplaces reflect our values, which include ensuring everyone is free from harassment and retaliation, earns equal pay for equal work and has a voice in their workplace.