

GAL Advocacy Network

Talking Points

- Let them know you are calling because Budget Conference is starting.
- Be objective, respectful and concise. If you are leaving a phone message, state the purpose for your call, for example: *I am calling to urge the Senator/Representative to reduce cuts proposed for the GAL Program.* If you are sending an email, state the purpose in the subject line, for example: *Preserve GAL Program funding.*
- Explain that dependent children desperately need advocates in court to protect their rights, move their cases more quickly and provide independent advocacy of their best interests.
- Emphasize the importance of GAL advocacy for judicial decision-making.
- If you are able, provide a personal story demonstrating how GAL advocacy made a difference for a child.
- Ask legislators to reduce cuts to the GAL Program.

Other Information (Not intended as Talking Points but designed to help answering any questions.)

Technical information about the proposals:

- In SB 2600, our “line number” is 802. The Senate proposes an 8% cut (\$2.6 million) and elimination of 49 positions. We estimate this will result in 990 children losing representation.
- In the House Bill 5101, our “line number” is 802. The House is proposing a 23% cut (\$7.6 million) and the elimination of 154 positions. As a result of this cut, approximately 5,700 children will lose representation and more than 150 people will be laid off. This is more than one-third of the Program's workforce.

Be aware of some of the reasoning offered for the cut:

- Some people believe the cut is justified since the Program has grown substantially (over 220%). This statistic is accurate, but you must go back to FY 2002/2003 before establishment of the Statewide Office and had a budget of \$9 million. All increases the Program has been given have gone to meet an unmet need. When the Program was in the court system, approximately 50% of children had advocates. At the Program's highest level of funding, over 85% of children had advocates.
- Some people say the Program was spared cuts when other agencies took reductions. Since 2007/2008 the Program has suffered over \$2.5 million in budget cuts (over 7%). This has caused thousands of children to be unrepresented. The Program has only truly avoided a cut once - in 2007 Special Session. A 4% cut was vetoed in the 2009 Special Session. However, there has been a “holdback” of funding to agencies statewide. Therefore, despite the veto, the Program has actually experienced a 4% cut this year. The Program has had to keep 32 positions frozen, resulting in a loss of representation for over 1000 children.