

The Sun

Tripp asks friends for help with bills; Donations: As a hearing nears on Maryland wiretapping charges, her defense fund seeks donations to help pay \$750,000 in legal fees.

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Linda R. Tripp wants your help -- about \$1 million worth.

With a new Web site and newspaper advertisement, as well as a continuing direct-mail campaign, Tripp's legal defense fund is reaching out for donations to help pay her bills.

Since Tripp's illicit taping of phone conversations with Monica Lewinsky exposed the scandal that led to President Clinton's impeachment in December, she says she has amassed about \$750,000 in legal bills, a figure that could easily climb past \$1 million.

Now, as her lawyers prepare to battle Maryland wiretapping charges this week, Tripp has launched a broad appeal to Americans -- especially those who loathe Clinton, such as truck driver Larry J. Mulholland.

"I despise the way the current administration has used the power of the federal government to harass and intimidate those who represent a threat, real or imagined," said Mulholland, who lives in Kansas City, Mo. "Linda Tripp is a patriot."

Mulholland won't reveal how much he donated to the Linda R. Tripp Defense Fund Trust. But he said in an e-mail before leaving on a cross-country trip: "I am not a wealthy man, I am a long-haul trucker, with a college degree, but I will do what is needed to support causes I deem worthy."

'A drop in the bucket'

Despite the help of Mulholland and others, Tripp's attorneys aren't hopeful that they will recover their fees.

"Her defense fund will never amount to more than a drop in the bucket," said Stephen M. Kohn, who represents Tripp in a lawsuit alleging that Clinton administration and Pentagon officials violated her privacy.

Tripp, who lives in Columbia, was indicted in July on two counts of illegally taping a conversation with Lewinsky, a White House intern who was Tripp's friend, and then disclosing the tapes' contents to Newsweek magazine. Her legal fees will certainly mount as that case enters the courtroom. Her attorneys and state prosecutors are scheduled to argue motions Friday in Howard County Circuit Court.

W. Peyton George, a trustee of Tripp's defense fund, declined to reveal how much money was in the account. But others familiar with the fund say it has raised more than \$100,000.

"It has raised a very considerable amount of money," said Philip Coughter, Tripp's spokesman. "It has been quite successful."

Coughter declined to name the organization handling Tripp's money-raising efforts on behalf of the fund. But the trust has taken several recent steps to heighten public awareness and build support for Tripp.

The fund purchased an advertisement in the Nov. 8-14 edition of the Washington Times national weekly. The ad features a photograph of Clinton wagging his finger as he said: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman."

Large type above the picture reads: "In the aftermath of President Clinton's lies, Linda Tripp faces 10 years in prison and \$20,000 in fines for telling the truth."

The fund established its Web site last month, Coughter said. The site displays a photograph of Tripp, her arms folded across her chest. She also has posted a letter thanking supporters, some of whom have posted notes of encouragement.

Coughter said most of the donors were outraged by what he called a "politically motivated prosecution."

Several Tripp supporters, asked for comment, echoed Coughter's remark. All had posted e-mails and notes on the Web site, www.lindatripp.com.

Jim Hall of Texas is a retired furniture maker. He was surfing the Internet when he spotted Tripp's appeal for money, so he sent her a \$100 check. Hall says she ought to have an opportunity to tell her side of the story in court.

But it wasn't easy to send the money.

"I think her fund-raising attempts have been lousy," said Hall, 62. "I had to do some linking up on the Internet to find [her site]. I thought it might have been an Internet scam."

Houston contractor Rocky Lane donated \$50, in part because he sympathizes with Tripp. "She sees her picture on 'Saturday Night Live' and they make her look like a cow because of her appearance," he said in an interview. "They make her out to be the worst woman on the face of the Earth because she tried to cover her butt."

But others remain unsure about sending money.

Ruth Waning of Massachusetts says she sent Tripp an e-mail of support after visiting the Web site of Lucianne Goldberg, a literary agent and Tripp friend. "I think she's a very brave woman," Waning said of Tripp.

The 58-year-old homemaker is considering sending a \$25 check. "I've been knocking it around," Waning said. "I just think that our

government is in such disarray that if we don't expose or get rid of the garbage, nobody is ever going to take our government seriously."

Hearing on immunity

Friday's scheduled hearing in Howard County marks the first courtroom action related to the wiretapping charges.

Tripp defense attorney Joseph Murtha has asked Judge Diane O. Leasure to determine whether state prosecutors used Tripp's federally immunized testimony against her during their yearlong investigation.

Tripp told a federal grand jury that she knew it was against Maryland law to tape conversations without the other party's consent. But she continued to do so, she testified, to protect herself.

Tripp is pursuing a civil lawsuit alleging that the White House and Pentagon invaded her privacy when officials disclosed contents of her personnel files, FBI files, security files and other government records. The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages against 11 past and present Clinton administration figures.

Civil suits involving so many people, with so many attorneys, generally take years to resolve.

But that hasn't deterred Tripp, her associates say.

In a brief message posted on her Web site, Tripp thanks supporters: "While others, who have mocked the things you believe in, have book tours and promising futures, I have three-quarters of a million dollars in legal bills. But at the darkest moments, when my faith was shaken, your support has reaffirmed that faith.

"They've guessed wrong they can win in the end. Your continued support will show them that they've guessed wrong."

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Caption:

Appeal: Linda R. Tripp is seeking donations through a new Web site, newspaper ad and a direct-mail campaign.

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