



**John G. Levi, Chairman
LSC Board of Directors**

**Remarks at Access to Justice Reception
American Bar Association 2010 Annual Meeting
San Francisco, August 6, 2010**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interrupt your reception.

It is a particular honor for me to follow the renowned Justice Earl Johnson, who, as he just told you, was also a former student of my father's.

It is great to be with all of you this evening, and a privilege to be a part of this celebration of SCLAID's [the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants] 90th anniversary.

I am honored to serve as the 11th chairman of the LSC Board and to be joined on that Board with the ABA's own former president, the remarkable Robert Grey. I also note that with us this evening is LSC's longest serving and recently retired head, Helaine Barnett, and the former LSC Board member, whose Board seat I now occupy, Herb Garten.

We at LSC are still relatively youthful—the Corporation has just celebrated its 35th anniversary.

As many of you recall, LSC funding was in jeopardy back in the mid-1990s. It was SCLAID and the ABA that campaigned to save LSC. You helped ensure that civil legal services are provided to low-income Americans whose myriad issues put them in need of the same legal assistance that those of us who are not economically challenged have available to us every day of the week.

LSC and SCLAID have had a strong relationship through the years, and as the new LSC Board chairman, I want to further enhance that relationship. Our partnership is vital.

This is an important time for LSC, and a critical time for the hundreds of thousands of low-income Americans who come to our programs because they are at risk of losing their livelihood and their homes and who have to deal with pressing issues in their families. And their numbers are increasing.

The statistics we know paint an extremely worrisome picture. Whether it is the 54 million Americans who qualify for assistance under LSC's guidelines or whether you prefer to look at the equally alarming statistic that there is only one legal aid lawyer for every 6,400 people in poverty as opposed to 1 in 400 for the rest of the population—this circumstance requires our full attention.

Many of you have spent a lifetime championing this cause. From my perspective, what we have developed here somewhat haphazardly over the years in the area of civil legal assistance is one of the best public-private partnerships in our nation, from the standpoint of funding to the significant value of donated professional services. But that is probably only well known to those in the field. It is certainly not well understood throughout the land—even among other members of the bar.

And as we think about the implications of this partnership and the potential for its growth, I know I can count on all of you to speak up for our mission, help us obtain higher funding, and help us increase pro bono and other volunteer efforts. We must do better.

Two concluding thoughts: LSC has a new Board, and I think you will find us to be an energetic and serious group that hopes and expects to accomplish much during its time in office. I look forward to working with SCLAID and all the other ABA committees.

The Board has begun, as you probably know, a nationwide search for a new president. The process for identifying potential candidates is underway, and if you know any outstanding lawyers who should be considered, please have them get in touch with us.

Now, if you will indulge me a personal reflection for a moment, it was exactly 35 years ago in Montreal that my father, Edward Levi, as a relatively new United States Attorney General, had the privilege of addressing the ABA's annual meeting. On that occasion, he offered his hopes for the Department of Justice in words that I believe still resonate today for those of us in the field:

“Our hope is that we can meet problems with candor and some depth of understanding, informed by the history of our discipline, conscious of the ideals to be maintained, vigilant for the welfare of our society and the protection of human rights; in short, in a way which fits the best traditions of our profession.”

The fight for equal justice is a call to our country to keep faith with its founding values. Together, we have no choice but to succeed in meeting that pledge. Thank you.