

Prepared Remarks
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Chairman, LSC Board of Directors
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Pro Bono Reception
San Diego, California

It is my privilege on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation to welcome you all this evening to this reception, where we will honor attorneys and law firms for their significant pro bono contributions to the clients of the LSC programs in California.

And it is a pleasure to be surrounded by leaders of the San Diego legal community, together with the Board of LSC, its president, Jim Sandman, and senior staff—and to be here in the city that Will Ferrell made so famous in his riotously funny movie, “Anchorman.”

And it is a distinct honor for all of us to be here with our distinguished speakers, Dave Jones, the Insurance Commissioner for the State of California, and Jon Streeter, the President of the State Bar of California.

Dave began his career in public service as a legal aid attorney, working at Legal Services of Northern California. And as a student at Harvard Law School, he was recruited by none other than me to spend his summer at Sidley Austin, in his home town of Chicago.

Jon is a partner at Kecker & Van Best in San Francisco and chair’s the firm’s pro bono committee. Jon has long maintained an active pro bono docket of his own, generally in cases involving civil rights issues. And, yes, there is a Levi family connection. Jon is a friend of both of my brothers.

Thank you, Dave and Jon, for joining us.

LSC is the single largest funder of civil legal assistance in the nation. Here in California, LSC provides about half of the funding for our 11 programs statewide. The Corporation’s Board has not met in San Diego since 1993, so thank you for coming out to share this special evening with us.

Also with us is Earl Johnson, who was a justice for 25 years on the California Court of Appeal and is a longtime champion of access to justice. Earl is attending the Board meeting as a representative of SCLAID. More important, he is a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, and I’m pretty sure he once told me that he was my father’s student.

I also want to recognize the executive directors of the LSC programs in California.

- Greg Knoll, who began our day with an informative tour of his program, the Legal Aid Society of San Diego.
- Sylvia Argueta with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.
- Neal Dudovitz of Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles.
- Irene Morales with Inland Counties Legal Services.
- Gary Smith with Legal Services of Northern California.
- Devon Lomayesva with California Indian Legal Services.
- Chris Schneider with Central California Legal Services.
- Estela Casas with Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance.

- Jose Padilla with California Rural Legal Assistance.
- Bob Cohen with the Legal Aid Society of Orange County.
- And, representing Bay Area Legal Aid, Haylee Alfonso, on behalf of Ramon Arias.

They are highly respected, experienced leaders in the civil legal aid community. Let's have a round of applause.

The LSC Board has benefited greatly from its firsthand visits to legal aid programs throughout the country. It has been a longstanding tradition of the LSC Board to hold three meetings each year in the states.

As our Board crisscrosses the country, we have asked each of the local LSC programs to nominate for special recognition those individuals or law firms that have been especially supportive of pro bono. And that is what we are doing here today, celebrating outstanding pro bono efforts by the bar.

We are all committed to pro bono and, because of the enormous need confronting LSC programs, must find ways to grow and enhance the wonderful work of volunteer lawyers who donate their time and services.

Last year, the LSC Board created a Pro Bono Task Force and we hope to have their preliminary recommendations this spring. The Task Force has five working groups drawing on outstanding members of the profession and asking them to come up with innovative recommendations that can help increase pro bono in a measureable way.

Now, I want to take this opportunity to introduce the LSC Board. Its members are working hard in a nonpartisan way to strengthen the mission of LSC and I am particularly proud of them for the work that they do, far beyond what they expected when there were nominated for this post.

Let me begin with a native Californian. Sharon Browne of Sacramento, a principal attorney in the Pacific Legal Foundation's Individual Rights Practice Group and a member of the foundation's senior management. Sharon also recently testified at the first statewide hearing, held in Sacramento, on this state's civil justice crisis. She did a great job.

- Robert Grey, a partner with Hunton & Williams in Richmond, Virginia. Robert is a former ABA president and has been tireless in his efforts to promote pro bono.
- Charles Keckler, of Arlington, Virginia, who has recently been teaching law at Penn State University. Charles is a former assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.
- Harry Korrell, who, like me, specializes in employment law. He is a longtime partner at Davis Wright Tremaine in Seattle. Harry co-chairs the Board's Pro Bono Task Force.
- Victor Maddox of Louisville, Kentucky. He is a partner with firm of Fultz Maddox Hovious & Dickens. Vic also has served as counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- Laurie Mikva of Evanston, Illinois. Laurie served for nearly 30 years as a civil legal aid attorney and a public defender in Illinois and Maryland. She is currently a Commissioner on the Illinois Court of Claims.

- Julie Reiskin, the executive director of the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition, a statewide disability-rights organization run by and for the disabled. Julie is an expert in health advocacy and health policy.
- Gloria Valencia-Weber, a professor at the University of New Mexico School of Law and a leading expert on Native American law.
- Father Joseph Pius Pietrzyk, a Dominican friar who is engaged in doctoral studies at the Vatican. In his prior life, he worked for three years at Sidley Austin in Chicago, in the Corporate and Securities practice.

One Board member cannot be with us this evening but arrives later tonight—Martha Minow. She is our vice chair, and she also is co-chairing the Pro Bono Task Force with Harry. Martha is the Dean of the Harvard Law School and Jeremiah Smith Jr. Professor of Law at Harvard.

One of the Board’s most significant undertakings in our first year was the recruitment of Jim Sandman as the new LSC President. Jim was managing partner at the Arnold & Porter law firm and a longtime leader in the District of Columbia pro bono community. He is nearing the end of his first year with LSC, and I want to congratulate him on the terrific job he is doing. He has been traveling across the country, tireless in his work on behalf of our grantees.

Our Board is committed to helping LSC fulfill its mission—promoting equal access to justice and ensuring the delivery of high-quality civil legal assistance to low-income Americans.

We are tremendously concerned, as we all should be, about the staggering and growing unmet civil legal needs in low-income communities and our country’s commitment to the promise of equal justice for all.

All of us are alarmed by our funding circumstances. Smaller budgets mean fewer lawyers and fewer people who receive representation.

You all are aware of the funding trends. Nationwide, LSC, IOLTA, and state funding for our grantees are declining. In 2009, those three sources combined amount to nearly \$792 million in legal aid funding. For 2011, estimates show that combination of funds has dropped to \$642 million—an 18 percent drop. And 2012 will likely result in a further decrease.

Here in California, LSC’s basic field funding has dropped to about \$42 million today. That is a significant reduction for our California grantees, who as recently as 2010 received nearly \$55 million from LSC alone.

Meanwhile, the number of people living in poverty has grown dramatically. In 2008, nearly 54 million Americans qualified for LSC-funded services. Today, we estimate that number has jumped to more than 63 million.

Clearly, in a time of inadequate funding, pro bono is more important than ever before. At LSC, we are dedicated to expanding pro bono and strengthening our public-private partnerships. We also must acknowledge that pro bono will not be able, by itself, to meet the legal needs of low-income Americans.

As a nation, we simply cannot let the turbulence we have experienced to cause us to turn away from properly funding civil legal assistance and our civil justice system.

That promise of a fair, equal and accessible system of justice was a part of our country’s founding, and our Founding Fathers placed “establish justice” before the common defense in the preamble to our Constitution.

As lawyers and citizens, we owe an orderly civil justice system to future generations of Americans. Just as we have benefited in the profession from what our predecessors gave to us, we in turn have a responsibility to those who will succeed us.

Thank you very much.