



THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

1818 MARKET STREET

37TH FLOOR

PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103

RONALD D. CASTILLE
CHIEF JUSTICE

(215) 560-5663
FAX: (215) 560-5807

Dear Pennsylvania Attorney:

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the landmark *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision establishing the right to counsel for the indigent in criminal trial matters. It's a perfect time to contemplate the legal community's ethical obligations to the civil side of justice, where few such Gideon-type rights have been recognized.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has supported civil legal aid in a variety of ways, including providing new avenues for funding legal services and setting up a loan forgiveness program for legal services attorneys funded by *pro hac vice* filing fees. Of course, the Court cannot do this alone. In each of the past two years, every lawyer in Pennsylvania contributed \$35 to civil legal aid through the IOLTA portion of our annual licensing fee. But it is volunteer efforts--whether in direct representation of clients or by further financial support--beyond that required payment that still matter.

In my travels across Pennsylvania, I have seen innovative and enthusiastic local bar legal services programming in many counties. The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, in partnership with our regional legal aid providers and a network of specialty legal aid programs, helps provide the framework and structure for civil legal assistance for the poor. Pro bono volunteers, encouraged by the Pennsylvania Bar Association and local bar associations, provide meaningful time and financial contributions by representing clients who have critical needs, but cannot afford private counsel. Our law schools inculcate the values of pro bono service in the next generation of Pennsylvania lawyers through IOLTA-funded legal clinical programs.

Together with Tom Wilkinson, President of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, I call on each of Pennsylvania's nearly 70,000 registered attorneys to personally commit to provide pro bono service through direct representation and/or financial support of our legal aid programs. Please take a few moments to reflect on the meaning of the Gideon decision, by accessing palawhelp.org and registering with paprobono.net to see the range of opportunities there are for pro bono service. And for those of you who already do so much, thank you!

Ronald D. Castille

Ronald D. Castille