

**Gala Remarks by  
Illinois Bar Foundation President Elizabeth  
October 14, 2016**



Good Evening. For those of you that I have not had the chance to meet yet this evening, my name is Elizabeth Kaveny. It is really my honor and fortune to serve as the President of the Board of the Illinois Bar Foundation this year and to welcome all of you to this year's Gala. What a beautiful night it is.

In 1972, a young man was buried in an unmarked grave in Missouri. His own attorney later added a tombstone which read simply:

**“Each era finds an improvement in the law for the benefit of mankind.”**

That man was a drifter by the name of Clarence Gideon.

That lawyer was Abe Fortas, who would go on to be a United States Supreme Court justice.

And that improvement that they created together was the right to counsel in criminal cases to those who cannot afford it.

Why? Because the United States Supreme Court recognized in Gideon v Wainwright what we already knew: We as a society place a high price upon our individual freedom.

Why do I tell you this story tonight?

Because for those of us fortunate enough to be sitting here at the Four Seasons in downtown Chicago on a beautiful Friday night - and we are the fortunate ones - we have countless blessings beyond our individual freedom – our children, our parents, the very homes we provide our families, our livelihoods, our life savings.

Countless blessings that we would equally put a high price on, maybe even sacrifice our individual freedom to protect if we had to.

Yet....

Every day in Illinois there are those less fortunate whose blessings are at issue in the very court system in which we work— custody of their children, ownership of their homes, the livelihood they try to support their families with, the safety of their elderly parents.

And every day, hundreds of our citizens step into the court system without the benefit of legal knowledge, some without the benefit of understanding the language, and most without the benefit of counsel.

Enter the Illinois Bar Foundation!

The role of the Illinois Bar Foundation is to step in. The dollars we raise from you go to provide education, knowledge, and available counsel. In other words, access to justice.

This year we launched a pilot program with Illinois Legal Aid Online -Legal Questions, an internet site which will allow individuals to log in, post a question and get answers from license attorneys.

This year we funded Illinois JusticeCorps to provide personnel in courthouses who can help people with pro bono forms, directions and understanding court procedures.

This year we partner with Illinois law schools to fund a graduate who will remain at their alma mater and work in their legal clinics.

And finally, this year, we will give hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants to legal clinics throughout the state that we have vetted for you, by reviewing their missions, organizational structure, financials and even conducted site inspections. All to make sure your dollars are going to good use and the clinics are providing counsel to those in need.

So tonight, I ask you this favor.

At some point, take a moment, a silent moment to yourself. Think of one of **your** blessings – whether it's your children, your parents, your health, your home.

If your blessing was called into question in a legal setting, what would **you** do?

Chances are you would reach out to one of us.

You would seek legal counsel.

You would make sure you had access to justice.

And so tonight, raise your paddle, make your donation, place your bids, in thanks for your blessings. And help us – the Illinois Bar Foundation - raise the funds tonight to make your reality a reality for others less fortunate.