

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**



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County Executive

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Constitutional Right to Counsel
*In 80-90 percent of criminal cases,
the accused cannot afford to hire a private lawyer*

Sacramento CA- A March 18 ceremony on the steps of the Gordon D. Schaber Courthouse will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, in which a poor Florida prison inmate caused the single biggest change in the history of the U.S. criminal justice system. The *Gideon* decision guaranteed assistance of counsel to all persons charged with committing a criminal offense, rich or poor.

"The right to be heard would be, in many cases, of little avail if it did not comprehend the right to be heard by counsel..... Without it, though he be not guilty, he faces the danger of conviction because he does not know how to establish his innocence."This noble ideal cannot be realized if the poor man charged with crime has to face his accusers without a lawyer to assist him."
Gideon v. Wainwright

The *Gideon* decision, with its promise of equal justice, showed the Supreme Court at its best. "Ensuring fairness and equal treatment in criminal trials is the responsibility of us all," said Sacramento County Supervisor Roger Dickinson. "We must keep the 'Gideon Promise' a reality."

Dickinson invited attorneys and courthouse staff to join him including Public Defender Paulino Duran, as well as county, state, and federal Judges, Defenders, and Prosecutors, in commemorating March 18 as "Gideon Day." The ceremony will take place at noon on the east steps of the courthouse.

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Media Resources

After a brief ceremony, ceremony participants will be available to the media:

Roger Dickinson, County Supervisor, District 1

Judge Shubb

Judge Garcia

Paulino Duran, Public Defender

