



**Resolution
of
The Board of Supervisors of Ventura County
Proclamation**

*Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of
U.S. Supreme Court's Ruling in Gideon v. Wainwright
Reaffirming the Principle of Equal Justice for all Regardless of Income*

WHEREAS, the County of Ventura has a longstanding tradition of supporting equal justice regardless of income; and

WHEREAS, on March 18, 1963, the United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled that trial and conviction without the assistance of counsel is fundamentally unfair and violates the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. The ruling resulted from the following facts:

- Clarence Earl Gideon, a man with an eighth grade education, was charged with breaking into a Florida poolroom and stealing coins from a cigarette machine.*
- He asserted his innocence and requested counsel to represent him. His request was denied so he represented himself. He was convicted of felony breaking and entering with intent to commit a misdemeanor and sentenced to five years in state prison.*
- From his Florida prison cell, Gideon submitted a handwritten petition to the United States Supreme Court, arguing that the United States Constitution does not allow poor people to be convicted and sent to prison without legal representation.*
- At his trial following the Supreme Court's ruling, with assistance of counsel, Clarence Earl Gideon was acquitted.*

WHEREAS, 40 years after the Gideon decision, implementation of the right to counsel is extremely uneven across the nation, and people in other jurisdictions who cannot afford counsel are denied their basic right to a qualified attorney, resulting in unjust, life-altering verdicts. Public trust and confidence in criminal justice systems are shaken by exonerations of the innocent, revelations of overloaded and under funded indigent defense systems, and a sense that the quality of justice people receive is determined by the amount of money they have.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, on this the 40th anniversary of the decision mandating the right to counsel for all, hereby reaffirm our commitment to insuring equal justice regardless of income, reconfirm our support for our Public Defender and Indigent Defense organizations; and hereby proclaim that MARCH 18, 2003 IS DESIGNATED AS GIDEON DAY IN VENTURA COUNTY.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors on this 11th day of March 2003.

Judy Mikels

CHAIR, VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
JUDY MIKELS, SUPERVISOR 4TH DISTRICT

Steve Bennett

STEVE BENNETT, SUPERVISOR 1ST DISTRICT

Kathy I. Long

KATHY I. LONG, SUPERVISOR 3RD DISTRICT

Linda Parks

LINDA PARKS, SUPERVISOR 2ND DISTRICT

John K. Flynn

JOHN FLYNN, SUPERVISOR 5TH DISTRICT