

# GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION



**WHEREAS**, Clarence Earl Gideon was charged with breaking into a Florida poolroom on June 3, 1961 and stealing coins from a cigarette machine. He asserted his innocence.

**WHEREAS**, Gideon's request for counsel was denied, and the 51 year old drifter with an eighth grade education defended himself against the legal case presented by the state's prosecuting attorney. He was convicted of felon breaking and entering with intent to commit a misdemeanor, and was sentenced to five years in state prison.

**WHEREAS**, Gideon submitted a handwritten petition to the United States Supreme Court from his Florida prison cell, arguing that the United States Constitution does not allow poor people to be convicted and sent to prison without legal representation. Twenty-two state attorneys general submitted a brief supporting him.

**WHEREAS**, on March 18, 1963, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Gideon's trial and conviction without the assistance of counsel was fundamentally unfair and violated the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. It is an "obvious truth," the Court stated, that "in our adversary system of criminal justice, any person haled into court, who is too poor to hire a lawyer, cannot be assured a fair trial unless counsel is provided for him."

**WHEREAS**, at his retrial with the assistance of counsel, Clarence Earl Gideon was acquitted.

**WHEREAS**, 40 years later, implementation of right to counsel is extremely uneven across the nation, and people who cannot afford counsel are regularly denied their basic right to a qualified attorney, resulting in unjust, life-altering verdicts. Subsequent Supreme Court decisions have further expanded the states' obligation to provide counsel to people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer.

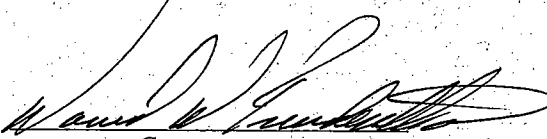
**NOW THEREFORE, I, DAVE FREUDENTHAL**, Governor of the State of Wyoming, do hereby proclaim March 18, 2003 to be

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in Wyoming, and by this proclamation also acknowledge the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wyoming Public Defender's Office. That Wyoming hereby rededicates itself to the principle of equal justice for all regardless of income, and promotes ongoing understanding of and commitment to the fulfillment of Gideon's promise.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Executive Seal of the Governor of Wyoming to be affixed this 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2003.



  
Governor