

## Gideon At 60 Op-Eds

2023 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, and while many states and localities were providing counsel prior to the ruling, the decision is widely viewed as the anchor to the right to counsel in the United States.

Although our nation's federal, state, and local public defense systems still struggle daily to get the funding, resources, support, and independence they need to fulfill their mission, rather than talk about what is wrong with our public defense system, NACDL is using this 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to celebrate the work being done day in and day out by public defenders, contractors, and court appointed attorneys. We want to let those attorneys know that we see their hard work and dedication; we value their compassion and tenacity; and that we recognize the critical role they play in protecting individuals, communities, the constitution, and our legal system as a whole.

To mark this Anniversary, NACDL is conducting a national campaign to place op-ed pieces in media outlets across the country that demonstrate support for and the value of public defense lawyers. At its core, public defense work is local, so our goal is to have locally written pieces placed in local and regional papers, blanketing the country with positive pieces on the power and value of public defense.

**Interested in giving it a go?** Our Communications Team can research the media markets in your area, gathering information on their submission rules and practices. The Communications Team can help you place your opinion piece. Contact Director of Communications, Jonathan Hutson, [JHutson@nacdl.org](mailto:JHutson@nacdl.org); Associate, Jessie Diamond, [jdiamond@nacdl.org](mailto:jdiamond@nacdl.org); and Associate, Kate Holden, [kholden@nacdl.org](mailto:kholden@nacdl.org).

**Have additional questions?** Contact the Communications Team or Director of Public Defense, Bonnie Hoffman, [Bhoffman@nacdl.org](mailto:Bhoffman@nacdl.org).

Included below are some prompts to help you think about topics and a set of tips on structure and writing.

On behalf of NACDL, the thousands of public defense lawyers across the country, and the millions of clients they serve, thank you for taking the time to let them know you support them and the work they are doing.

## Tips on How To Write Opinion Essay for the Anniversary of *Gideon*

An opinion essay, sometimes called an op-ed, is a concise piece of writing that expresses an opinion on a particular policy or issue and issues a call to action. This is a way to share ideas with a broad audience and can help shape public opinion. If you're interested in writing an opinion essay for a newspaper or website, here are some tips:

- Choose a topic about which you are knowledgeable and passionate, so that you can write persuasively with authority and conviction.
- Start with a strong lead to grab the reader's attention. This could be a quote, a rhetorical question, a significant statistic, or an anecdote.
- Clearly state your opinion in the first paragraph. This will help the reader understand your perspective and where you stand on the issue.
- Use evidence and examples to support your argument. This will make your opinion more credible and persuasive.
- Be concise. Op-eds are usually 600-800 words – including the author(s) one-line bio(s) at the end -- so make every word count.
- Use a clear writing style. Avoid or explain jargon and technical language that may be difficult for average readers to understand.
- End with a call to action. Encourage the reader to take some sort of action, which could be supporting legislation or rules changes, writing a letter to their elected representatives, or sharing your piece on social media.

Finish with a one-line bio and phone number where you can be reached by the opinions editor.

Writing an opinion essay can be a rewarding experience. By following these tips, you'll be well on your way to crafting a compelling persuasive piece.

**Gideon At 60 Prompts:** To help you get started, think about pieces that may answer one of these concepts:

- The right to counsel/public defense is a cornerstone of American ideals because...
- Robust public defense services protect communities by...
- Why is *Gideon* still relevant today?/What does *Gideon* stand for?
- When a public defense lawyer stands up for an individual, they stand up for us all.
- Why I am proud to be a public defense lawyer/Why being a public defense lawyer is a noble and proud calling.
- Myth Busting: What misconceptions do people have about public defense/public defense lawyers?
- What does it mean to be a public defense lawyer today?