

March 11, 2003

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
United States House of Representatives  
2449 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Sensenbrenner:

March 18, 2003, marks the 40th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, which guaranteed counsel for indigent defendants facing imprisonment. Enclosed is a copy of our award-winning magazine commemorating this occasion. As many of the prominent writers explain, the promise of *Gideon* remains largely unfulfilled because of underfunded public defender offices and the assignment of underpaid and inexperienced counsel to represent the poor.

The Innocence Protection Act (IPA), which we understand will be reintroduced this Congress, has been the leading federal bill addressing these systemic failures. Providing reasonable access to post-conviction DNA testing is one goal, but the legislation's key provisions would help ensure adequate compensation and increased resources for appointed defense counsel in capital cases. The growing list of death row inmates exonerated by DNA and other evidence has fueled significant bipartisan support for this legislation since it was first introduced in 2000. In addition to 250 cosponsors in the House of Representatives and 32 cosponsors in the Senate, the Innocence Protection Act has garnered support from many victim groups and former and current prosecutors.

The National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and its 11,000 members are committed to fulfilling the promise of *Gideon*. We ask that you join us in this mission by supporting the Innocence Protection Act.

Sincerely,

Lawrence S. Goldman  
President