

The State of Washington



Proclamation

WHEREAS, Washington state values every one of its citizens – rich and poor; and

WHEREAS, many of us cannot afford to hire a lawyer when we have to go to court; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of public defender lawyers and staff and assigned counsel in Washington struggle every day to meet the needs of clients facing loss of liberty and are a critical part of maintaining a fair justice system; and

WHEREAS, this problem was addressed 50 years ago in the case of Clarence Earl Gideon, a 51-year old man with an eighth grade education, who was charged with a crime but could not afford a lawyer; and was convicted and sentenced to five years in state prison; and

WHEREAS, Gideon submitted a handwritten petition to the United States Supreme Court from his prison cell, arguing that the United States Constitution bars the states from sending poor people to prison without legal representation; and

WHEREAS, on March 18, 1963, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Gideon's conviction and 5-year prison sentence violated the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution because he was not provided with a lawyer; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the *Gideon* decision, all states now provide court-appointed counsel to people facing criminal convictions and imprisonment but cannot afford a lawyer; and

WHEREAS, since 1854, more than a century before the *Gideon* decision, Washington has recognized that indigent criminal defendants are entitled to a lawyer at public expense; and

WHEREAS, the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court *Gideon* decision is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the value of equal justice under the law;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the State of Washington do hereby declare April 2013,

Public Defense Month

in Washington State, and I urge all citizens to join me in this special observance.

Signed this 28th day of March, 2013

Governor Jay Inslee



Handwritten signature of Jay Inslee in blue ink.