

Now is the Time to Get Committed

I HAVE HEARD THAT THE DIFFERENCE between involvement and commitment is like ham and eggs. The pig is committed; the chicken is involved. This saying has been attributed to everyone from Abraham Lincoln to Martina Navratilova. (Perhaps Navratilova would be interested in our upcoming Golf & Tennis Classic – read below for more.) Nevertheless, the historical sources have greater certainty that Lincoln said in a more earnest manner, “Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality.”

My own personal experiences have enhanced my commitment to meeting the promise of access to justice for all. Please reflect on your own experience and then join me in championing the cause of legal aid for people struggling with the reality of poverty, abuse, and discrimination.

A TRAFFIC CASE. I was once asked to represent a seasonal worker who had been cited for driving without a license in a vehicle for which he did not have the registration and for failing to come to a complete stop at a red light. He had an active license but he had lost it. The owner of the vehicle that he was driving could not find the vehicle registration. My client thus had three citations to address. As most of you know, normally these citations will be withdrawn if you are able to produce a copy of your license and the registration shortly after the citations are issued.

My client did not know how to go about getting a copy of his license nor was he able to get a copy of the registration on his own. I was asked to represent this gentleman and went to Traffic Court with him.

At Traffic Court we were able to demonstrate that while my client did not have physical possession of his license, his license was still active. We were also able to demonstrate that the vehicle was properly registered. Both of those citations were withdrawn.

Ultimately, the prosecutor was willing to plead down the red light citation to a non-moving violation, reducing the

amount of the fine my client had to pay and eliminating the possibility of his license being jeopardized.

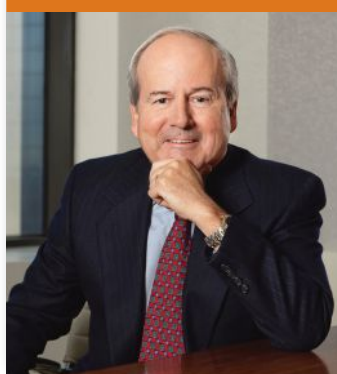
Obtaining this result for my client was easy because I knew the system. However, had my client not been represented, he in all probability would not have been able to demonstrate to the court that he had an active license and that the vehicle was properly registered. Without those proofs, my client's license would have been suspended. In all probability, he would not have stopped driving as he needed to drive in order to earn a living. Had he been stopped while driving with the suspended license, his problems would have been compounded.

THE NEED FOR LEGAL AID. There was nothing about the result I obtained for my client that was particularly noteworthy. My basic legal services helped the client to navigate the sometimes obscure and intricate problems commonly presented by the legal process.

However, there are thousands of people in Philadelphia for whom the legal system is terrifying. Many people lack an understanding of how the system operates and what options they may have to address a particular problem. They need legal assistance to help them assess their situation, explain their options, and then navigate their way through the system, be it a traffic citation, a landlord-tenant matter, a change in disability benefits or an issue for a student at school.

At this time, many local legal aid orga-

By Thomas A. Brophy



Federal Funding Cuts Announced

Many of the legal aid nonprofits supported by the Bar Foundation will be significantly affected by funding cuts included in the proposed federal budget for 2018. The initial budget was announced on March 15. The budget proposes to eliminate all funding for the Legal Services Corporation. Major cuts are also proposed to other federal programs affecting people struggling with poverty, housing, education, health care, and much more.

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Go now to www.philabarfoundation.org.

nizations are experiencing urgent increases in client demand for their services. These nonprofits also face potentially significant cuts in their federal and state funding. The situation is serious and expected to continue and possibly expand. Children, families, seniors, and many others are affected on matters ranging from health care to employment and education to immigration. Your committed action is needed now to ensure continuity and to strengthen vital services for people in need.

Many of us will spend \$25 or more for a bottle of wine and will do that on a weekly or a monthly basis. If we can do that, then truly we can also donate to help the less fortunate in our community. Why not invest in access to justice and the full range of legal aid nonprofits supported by the Philadelphia Bar Foundation?

Please make a commitment and act now. Several options for meaningful action are listed below. Go to our website to learn more – www.philabarfoundation.org.

DONATE YOUR TIME AND TALENT. Philadelphia Bar Association Chancellor Deborah R. Gross is leading a new pro bono volunteerism initiative, “The Challenge Ahead: Access to Justice.” Visit PhiladelphiaBar.org for ways you can make a difference.

DONATE YOUR TREASURE. I have joined with Chancellor Gross in calling for your generous support of the Foundation's “Special Circumstances Campaign”

to drive additional resources to meet pressing needs. Donors can be assured that their contributions will be distributed using a thoughtful and careful process in response to the greatest challenges facing individuals and families and the highly effective legal aid organizations that serve them. See more on the Foundation's website.

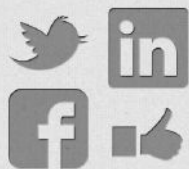
COMPETE FOR A GREAT CAUSE. There are two upcoming opportunities where you can #ScoreforJustice! On Thursday, April 27, the Association's Young Lawyers Division is holding its annual fundraiser benefiting the Foundation titled “Striking Injustice: The Bar Abides,” a charity bowling event held at North Bowl in Northern Liberties. Register at PhiladelphiaBar.org.

The Foundation's 29th Annual Golf & Tennis Classic takes place this year on Monday, June 12 at Green Valley Country Club in Lafayette Hill. This is your chance to support the premier golf and tennis outing for the entire legal community, enjoy a great day at Green Valley, and ensure access to justice for all. Please join me there along with many other legal community leaders. Go to the Foundation's website and get your tickets before the event is sold out.

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(tabrophy@mdwvcg.com), president and CEO at Marshall Dennehey Warner Coleman & Goggin, P.C., is president of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation.



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