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It is good to be here and to be with NLADA as it begins the celebration of its centennial year. Let me say how grateful I am to Don [Saunders]. He actually tried to get me to come to Denver last year—Frank [Strickland] was probably hoping I could go—but as we all know the confirmation process didn't allow me to be with you. Don comes to almost all of our LSC Board meetings, even our committee meetings, and has been tireless in his efforts for us and so helpful to me in the transition. Weeks ago, Don invited me and asked me to join you today to talk about my priorities as LSC Board Chairman. I'm still trying to figure out whether Don was throwing me a softball or hardball with that suggestion.

I want to take a moment here to recognize and to thank Frank Strickland for his long dedicated service as my immediate predecessor chairman of the LSC Board. It has been a great privilege to get to know him, to learn from him, and to be able to turn to him for help during our transition. It is a particular pleasure to be here with him in Atlanta where I know him to be a revered member of the Bar. He is my friend, and LSC joins with NLADA in applauding Frank and his exceptional public service.

Vic Fortuno, the LSC President and General Counsel, is in the house and I know you all know him, and he will brief all of you at an LSC Updates session tomorrow afternoon. Vic has stepped up to the plate during this transition, and at this juncture has served nearly a year as acting president of LSC. Vic has done a great job in this role and I cannot thank him enough.

I see a number of executive directors of LSC-funded programs are with us today, and let me just take a second here to say thank you to all of you for leading the effort, particularly in these challenging times, of providing low-income Americans with critical civil legal assistance.

I had a wonderful visit yesterday afternoon with Phyllis Holmen of the Georgia Legal Services Program, and Steve Gottlieb of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. Their programs do terrific work—in disability rights, in foreclosure, in serving veterans, in reaching out to rural communities, in pro bono and in obtaining grants and non-federal funds.

They are not alone. As I am discovering, with much pride, LSC programs on the whole are outstanding, doing wonderful work, even despite funding and resource constraints, and working so hard in their communities to meet the compelling need.

We have been inviting and will continue to bring LSC programs to Board meetings to brief the Board on issues that are topical or regional, so that we get direct, first-hand information from the field. I want to enhance the flow of information to the Board on what is happening in the field. LSC grantees do significant work and the Board needs to know about it in a timely way.

The Board looks forward to having more frequent communications with grantees and sharing its goals with the field. For example, we are very interested in issues confronting military families and veterans. Some of you already have veterans' projects, and I applaud you for reaching out to veterans. Earlier this year, members of Congress asked that LSC become aware of and involved with the veterans' readjustment counseling centers that have been set up across the nation. A number of grantees—some already had created important consortiums within their communities—were willing to help out with the launching of a pilot initiative in collaboration with those vet centers.

In addition, as we heard at our Board meeting in Milwaukee this past July, a group of grantees was working to create a special dedicated website for veterans and military families. Nan Heald of Pine Tree Legal Assistance has been a key leader in developing this national website, which will be unveiled more formally next week in Washington. We are so grateful to you and the work of your team. Nan, I know you are here, please stand up so we can recognize you.

The issues confronting veterans are extremely compelling, and, frankly, if we don't take the lead on their behalf, I'm really not sure who will in any organized way.

I too want to take note of the fact that today is Veterans Day. Our veterans have been on the front lines fighting to defend our most basic freedoms and now we need to stand up for them. If there are veterans in the room would you please stand up and be recognized.

As you know, the full Board nominated by President Obama and confirmed by the Senate is now in place. The Chief Justice of the United States will officiate next week at a ceremonial swearing in of the final four members of our Board.

The new Board met for the first time last month in Louisville, and we had terrific presentations from the four LSC programs in Kentucky, from executive directors in the Appalachian region, and from three of our grantees in the Gulf Coast region. At the Board level, we have been following the Gulf claims process to see how we can be appropriately helpful to the grantees, and we have had some success in explaining to Ken Feinberg how the consortium in the Gulf views the hardships facing low-income people in that region.

Our new Board, as was the case with Frank's Board, is energetic and serious about supporting the mission of LSC. I won't go through the list of Board members this morning—there are 10 others besides myself—but I do want to stress that the collective expertise on the Board is

impressive, that we are all getting along, and that we look forward to receiving helpful input from NLADA, grantees or other interested parties.

The Board's membership is bipartisan, as you know. This, I believe, is a great strength and ultimately an advantage for LSC, especially at a time when segments of the public and the Congress are questioning the role of government.

I'm sure you all think that our recent election results will give us just the opportunity that we've been waiting for—to exercise our powers of persuasion.

We are going to have to do more in reaching out to members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to more fully educate them regarding the circumstances in our country, and we also need to pay attention to those who may still harbor reservations regarding LSC and the work of its grantees.

From my perspective, what has come together somewhat haphazardly over the years in the area of civil legal assistance now likely represents one of the very best public-private partnerships in our nation. It is vital that we keep it strong and growing.

Whether you believe in big government or small government, it is important as a society that we pay for those things that are essential to our most fundamental freedoms, and one of the most significant is to administer justice under the law for all people and to deliver on the nation's promise of equal justice for all.

I believe that our Board's chief priority is to find ways to increase funding. In that effort, the Board will need your help. I know I can count on you to speak up without political agenda for LSC's mission, to help us obtain higher funding, and to help us increase pro bono and other volunteer efforts.

Our Board is off to a good start—certainly a busy one.

- We are well into a search for a new president. A number of very promising applications are in, and we hope to start the first round of in-person interviews near the end of the month.
- Together with the incoming president, the Board will be undertaking the development of a Strategic Plan for LSC. The Board will want to hear from you, from clients and from all interested parties. And at the appropriate time we will involve you in the comment-seeking process.
- The Board has launched an independent task force to review its fiscal oversight role. This will be a big undertaking, clearly. I'll return to the task force in a moment.
- We are building on Frank's Board's momentum to encourage greater pro bono support across the country. The Board hopes to establish a pro bono task force next year, after we have seen progress on some of our first initiatives.

- The Board has just established a new Development Committee that will be looking for new resources, and although I'm not hugely optimistic about finding significant new revenue, we are going to give it a serious try.
- In the area of research, we will want to promote effective and high-quality research following up on the Justice Gap reports that depicts the stark reality in civil legal assistance between resources and need.

Last month at the Board's Louisville meeting, I outlined a few areas that I think will give you an even greater sense of the issues that we will be paying particular attention to in the coming year.

First, as I just said, we need to increase resources for legal services.

I am convinced that our LSC grantees do terrific work, but as you know all too well, they do not have sufficient funding. Our current appropriation and funding levels are not adequate to properly do the job.

I realize that for many of you, federal funding may be more critical than in the past. IOLTA and other funding sources are shrinking, and many of you have redoubled your local fundraising efforts, and some of you have been forced to cut staff, or freeze hiring, or hold the line on pay raises and benefits. All this has an impact on clients and legal services.

On Capitol Hill, we repeatedly hear that programs need to increase pro bono support, that the nation has a million lawyers, and that more lawyers should be volunteering to take the cases of low-income clients.

While LSC grantees have done an outstanding job in recent years of increasing private attorney involvement, we will still need to do more to involve the private bar. If you have ideas or innovations in this area, we will want to hear about them, and we will want to share those innovations and ideas across our community.

Number two—I hope we can find a way to enhance communications between LSC and grantees and among grantees to foster the sharing of best practices.

This is an area where I think we can all do better. LSC has formal and informal arrangements that all share the goal of inspiring excellence and innovation. This NLADA conference has a session on innovations in legal services, and TIG [LSC's Technology Initiative Grants program] holds an annual meeting that highlights innovations that can be replicated. Because our resources are stretched, we need to further improve relationships among grantees and LSC, and put more effort into webinars, teleconferences, and enhanced regional conferences.

I know there are many regional and local issues and concerns. I fully understand that our grantees are independent 501(c)(3) corporations with multiple funding sources and unique needs. I understand that LSC grantees also have a proud tradition of independence and focus on doing what is right for the communities they serve.

But we also need to think of ourselves, without a knee-jerk reaction, as a national network, and find ways to leverage this network to help us achieve common goals.

TIG has shown that networking pays off. It has pulled together legal aid programs, the courts, the libraries and other organizations to find solutions for the self-represented and low-income clients. TIG helps support a national automated forms service, and promotes the use of standard, statewide court forms. TIG has also funded the development of the national website for military veterans.

I point to TIG as a success because it also leads me to my third point—we need to improve accountability at LSC and at grantees.

The LSC Inspector General this year raised questions about the TIG program's internal controls, and the Board promptly asked LSC Management to get the TIG program's house in order. LSC Management has done an internal review, is making administrative improvements to TIG and created an in-house group to continue efforts to improve oversight of TIG. I'm told that LSC is on track to award TIG grants by Thanksgiving.

As most of you know, a few LSC programs have been in the news, and have drawn congressional attention, because of embezzlements. In one case, a criminal complaint was filed against a program financial officer alleging embezzlement of more than \$1 million. I want to remind you that these cases of wrongdoing took place at large grantees and small grantees. They sometimes involved longtime trusted employees.

We are all hurt by these cases. News of improper activities is transmitted at the speed of light across the country and arrives on your congressman's Blackberry to be ingested with his or her morning coffee. Fund raising is hard enough in this economy, but just ask those who have taken these hits how hard it is after your program has been in the headlines. It's human nature to think that this will never happen to your program. But unfortunately it does happen, and when it does, it affects all of us.

So we need to be certain that the controls and the oversight are in place that will make these cases exceedingly, and I mean, exceedingly, rare. You are the first responders when it comes to oversight of your programs, and it is my expectation that you each take that role very seriously.

The LSC Board is committed, as we have said from the outset, to be vigilant in this area and to make sure our dollars are well spent. This is of the greatest importance, and as an early step, the Board established the fiscal oversight task force to examine our methodology and our results and performance in this arena.

The task force, co-chaired by board members Robert Grey and Victor Maddox, includes individuals with outstanding experience in grants administration, audits and internal controls, executive leadership and the best practices of foundations and charitable organizations.

The establishment of this task force is something that I committed to do early in my own confirmation process. And having read the many GAO reports and the reports of the LSC Inspector General, I felt it was imperative that we take a good hard look at ourselves and reach for the gold standard if it was not already in place.

You can help one another and your country at the same time by keeping your own financial houses in proper order.

So we have an ambitious agenda for LSC, but as I recently told the Board, we really have no choice. While we look for ways to improve our programs, we must never lose sight of our primary responsibility—to guard a piece of the nation’s core values. I believe that each generation has its own responsibility to the next generation to renew and strengthen those values given to it by preceding generations. We can never take the values of our country for granted.

Today, our nation faces a crisis in legal representation. It is a daunting challenge, with nearly 57 million Americans eligible for civil legal assistance, and that number is likely to grow. Together we must do a better job of educating our fellow countrymen as to the existence of this crisis and the implications for our country if it is not properly addressed.

Not far from here is The King Center, where an eternal flame keeps alive our memories of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I believe in some ways that all of us here are also keepers of a flame—maybe we each have a candle—and that we are answering the call of our country to keep faith with its founding values.

We have a responsibility to let our country know when that flame is flickering too low—and this is one of those times.

As Judge Griffin Bell, a towering and revered figure in this state and a former distinguished Attorney General of the United States, reminded us:

“There can be no equal justice under law unless all of our people have access to justice. . . . It does not matter how fair our laws may be, if access to their enforcement is denied or unavailable.”

The LSC Board greatly appreciates the dedication shown every day by legal aid attorneys, paralegals and support staff across this nation. You are not in this field for the money but you do it because of your dedication, commitment and passion for this cause. And by the light of the flame we hold together, we will lead this nation toward the fulfillment of its pledge of equal justice for all.

Thank you.