

The State of Washington



Proclamation

WHEREAS, Washington State values every one of its inhabitants – rich and poor – and many individuals cannot afford to hire a lawyer; and

WHEREAS, this problem was addressed 54 years ago in the case of Clarence Earl Gideon who was charged with a crime but could not afford a lawyer and was sentenced to five years in prison; and

WHEREAS, Gideon submitted a petition to the United States Supreme Court, 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 five-year prison sentence violated the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution because he was not provided 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 who cannot afford a lawyer; and

WHEREAS, on May 15, 1967, the Supreme Court established the constitutional right to counsel for juveniles accused of crimes facing delinquency proceedings (*In re Gault*); and

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

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

WHEREAS, the 54th anniversary of the Supreme Court *Gideon* decision and 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court *Gault* decisions represent an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the value of equal justice under the laws;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the state of Washington, do hereby declare March 18, 2017, as

Public Defense Day

in Washington, and I encourage all people in our state to join me in this special observance.

Signed this 10th day of March, 2017

Governor Jay Inslee

