



Justice is Our Future

My great grandparents fled a country in the late 19th century whose government was oppressive, divisive and brutal. There was not only a lack of access to justice for my ancestors; there was no justice at all.

The United States gave my family a new life and prosperity that we have enjoyed for several generations. I have always felt that I am the direct beneficiary of the best system of government in the world. I prefer to keep it that way for my daughter and for many future generations to come.

This helps explain why I have devoted my professional career to improving access to justice for all Arizonans. To me, there is nothing more critical to ensuring the longevity of our constitutional form of government than by making sure that justice is available to all, no matter how rich or poor.

As lawyers, we are told to be mindful of deficiencies in the administration of justice and of the fact that the poor, and sometimes persons who are not poor, cannot afford adequate legal assistance. We are encouraged to devote our professional time, resources and civic influence to ensure equal access

to our system of justice for all who cannot afford or cannot secure adequate legal counsel.

We have made great strides in this effort, but we need to do more.


One in every three Americans faces substantial obstacles in obtaining justice because they lack access to a lawyer when they confront civil legal problems. These unmet legal needs disproportionately affect low-income women and children—persons for whom legal assistance may be critical in obtaining housing and other vital services or protection from domestic violence.

As lawyers we have an important opportunity—and a special responsibility—to help address the inadequate fund-

ing of legal assistance programs and other barriers to justice in Arizona. This is why I appointed an Access to Justice Task Force, consisting of some of our finest lawyers, judges and public members. They will make recommendations on how we as lawyers can improve access to justice for all Arizonans.

The Task Force, led by my good friend and colleague Todd Lang, has met for several months. By the time of publication, it will have submitted its report to the State Bar Board of Governors. I am certain that the Task Force will come forward with creative ideas and thoughts on how Arizona lawyers can look within to address the problem, rather than exacerbate it through high fees that price most out of the market for legal services. I am eager to receive the

report and to act upon what I anticipate to be outstanding recommendations.

The preamble to our Rules notes that “No worthwhile human activity can be completely defined by legal rules.” The truth is, we don’t need laws or rules to tell us that we are morally and ethically obligated to use the respected status that we have achieved as lawyers to ensure that justice is equal and available to all. Our obligation to improve access to justice is not just the ethical and moral thing to do; it’s the right thing to do. 

We are morally and ethically obligated to use the respected status that we have achieved as lawyers to ensure that justice is equal and available to all.



REXUS/ISTOCK © SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

