

05/18/94
DIEGO VOLUNTEER LAWYER
PROGRAM DINNER

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Videotaped Remarks to the
San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program Dinner
May 18, 1994

Thanks for the introduction, Alan [Bersin, U.S. Attorney].
And thank you also, Carl Perot and Maria Arroyo [A-ROY-O] Tabin ^{tabin}
[Tuh-BIN], for all that you have done for the San Diego Volunteer
Lawyer program.

I'm honored and flattered to receive this award because the
work your organization does really matters to me. But I want to
reiterate that the people who truly deserve recognition are those
of you who are out there every day, working hard to help people
in need, often not getting credit or attention for what you do.

I'm sorry I can't be with you in person, but I am very much
with you in spirit. I share with you the belief that making sure
everyone has access to legal services should be a priority for
today's attorneys.

"Equal Justice for All" is an ideal that we still strive for
in this country. Yet it is one that we have little hope of
attaining without the work of lawyers who volunteer their time.
Their efforts to provide legal services for the most vulnerable
groups in our society -- children, the homeless, victims of HIV
and AIDS and victims of domestic violence -- help preserve the
entire foundation of our democratic society.

As our world becomes more complex, the need for legal
services becomes even more urgent. With state and local
government budgets growing ever tighter, the legal needs of the
poor will never be fully met by governmental programs. The
private bar must play a crucial role in meeting this need through
local, organized pro bono programs like the San Diego Volunteer
Lawyer Program. Such programs generate millions of dollars worth
of legal services through the volunteer participation of law
firms, lawyers, law students and other legal workers. The growth
of pro bono programs across the nation is the most significant
development in legal services in a decade.

Your work is proof that the law has the power to affect
people's lives. We have all seen when we spend just an hour of
our time giving legal assistance that it can make a great
difference to our clients and to our communities.

You know, our responsibility to give something back to the community is something the President talks a lot about. It speaks to our nation's long and great tradition of service to others. You all know that giving your time, your energy and your efforts is a gift, both to your community and yourself. You I hope that all Americans will follow your generous example.

So I thank you all today for making a difference and for bringing us closer to our goal of "equal justice for all".