

Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald
Welcoming Remarks for Access to Justice Conference
William S. Richardson School of Law
June 29, 2018

Good morning and aloha, and welcome to the 10th annual Access to Justice Conference. I'd like to start by thanking the Access to Justice Commission for sponsoring today's event, and by acknowledging my good friend and former colleague, Commission Chair Justice Simeon Acoba, for his leadership of the Commission. I also want to thank Dean Avi Soifer and the William S. Richardson School of Law for hosting the conference.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge Bob LeClair and the Hawaii Justice Foundation, the Cades Foundation, Pat Mau-Shimizu and Howard Luke of the Hawaii State Bar Association, as well as the countless attorneys, staff, and volunteers who are doing amazing things to increase access to justice throughout the state.

Mahalo to everyone who has worked so hard to plan today's conference, including Carol Muranaka and the Access to Justice Commission's Education Committee, and all of the distinguished speakers and panelists who will be participating at today's conference. And I'd like to extend a personal mahalo to the women at the Women's Community Correctional Center who made these beautiful lei for the speakers today.

Will you please join me in acknowledging everyone who helped make this conference possible?

I would also like to extend a warm aloha to Chief Judge Robert Katzmann of the U.S. Court of Appeal for the Second Circuit, who will present the keynote address today. Thank you for joining us here today, and for your leadership in providing high quality legal services to immigrants.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge the staff and attorneys of Hawaii's legal services providers who are here with us today. Thank you for all you do for your clients, working with limited resources, and in the face of great challenges.

We have an extraordinary access to justice movement here in Hawaii, which has accomplished some very significant things with limited resources. It truly is a grass roots movement, made up of people who are passionate about providing justice for all, and who are willing to work hard make it a reality. We have strong organizations that provide the framework for that effort - the Hawaii State Bar Association, the William S. Richardson School of Law, legal service providers, the Access to Justice Commission, and the Legislature. As a result of that hard work, people from around the country have begun to look closely at our efforts, and have begun to invest in what we are doing, to see how far forward we can move, and whether our innovations could work elsewhere.

For example, in 2016, Hawaii was awarded a \$100,000 "Justice for All" grant from the Public Welfare Foundation and the Kresge Foundation. We used those funds to bring people together from across the state to identify new ways to meet the often staggering challenges that people face in obtaining justice for the most fundamental human needs. Some great ideas came out of that process, and we have received additional funding from those foundations and from the Hawaii Justice Foundation to implement them. One will utilize what are being called "community navigators" -- trusted leaders in the community who people turn to when they don't know where else to go. They might be a respected coach or teacher, a church pastor, or a kupuna in the community. The goal is to identify these community leaders and provide them with the necessary tools and information so that they can help members of the community access legal resources. Another initiative, which has been championed by Rep. Della Au Belatti, involves the formation of an interagency roundtable, which, much like what was done on the federal level during the Obama administration, will bring together representatives from different state agencies to more effectively coordinate the efforts of state programs that help the vulnerable and underserved.

In addition to the JFA grant, thanks to the leadership of the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii and its Executive Director,

Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Hawaii and Alaska were awarded a \$1 million grant from Microsoft Corporation, in partnership with Legal Services Corporation and Pro Bono Net, to build a legal services portal for Hawaii and Alaska. The goal of this project is to develop an on-line legal service platform to help people identify legal problems, and then access resources to address both their legal issues and related needs. We want to make it as user friendly as possible through the development of "curated" experiences. Also, as the portal gains experience assisting people, it will use artificial intelligence to learn from that experience, so that it can provide more helpful information. The portal is currently being built, and is expected to have a "soft" rollout by the end of the year.

Notably, the Pew Charitable Trust, which has been a major participant in efforts to reform the criminal justice system nationally and here in Hawaii, has recently begun addressing unmet *civil* legal needs. They are particularly focused on both the portal project and the use of online forms of dispute resolution as a means to make courts more accessible to people who might otherwise be left out. Their involvement is another encouraging development and has the potential to open the door to additional resources.

Thanks to these initiatives and the tireless effort of all those individuals here who have volunteered time, talent, and

resources to support increased access to justice, we have the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals who desperately need help. Remember, we're only as good as the next person who walks into a courthouse representing themselves, who is scared and uncertain about the process, and who is seeking justice. We have **so much** work to do, but we have a strong foundation to build on going forward.

We would not be where we are today without every single person involved - every organization that stood up to advocate for justice on behalf of those whose voice otherwise wouldn't be heard, every attorney who took time away from their work to volunteer at a self-help center, every ATJ commissioner or committee member who brainstormed, debated, and toiled over the vision for ATJ in Hawaii. Thank you to each of you.

As I look around this room, I see many people who have been advocating for increased access to the courts and increased support for legal service providers, including some who have been doing so since before there was an ATJ commission, before Hawaii received national attention for its ATJ efforts, and before the phrase "access to justice" represented a national movement in its own right. One such person is Gary Slovin. Gary is an HJF board member, and an ATJ commissioner. Gary is someone who does not seek the spotlight, but I'd like to take a moment today to acknowledge his extraordinary contributions to

the access to justice movement in Hawaii. Gary has been a lifelong advocate for those who are marginalized and without power, going back to his first years as an attorney in Philadelphia, where he did pro bono work for the civil rights and anti-war movements. In Hawaii, he has used his extraordinary skills in governmental relations to advance the cause of access to justice, such as serving as a key player in the group that successfully advocated to get the Indigent Legal Assistance Fund, or ILAF, made permanent. ILAF helps to fund low-income service providers, and is a crucial source of financial support for many legal services providers in the state. Gary has continued to tirelessly advocate for funding for legal services providers at the legislature every year, representing both the ATJ Commission and HJF -- all pro bono! Last session, the legislature appropriated \$450,000 for civil legal services for indigent residents - we are grateful for that support.

Gary, your advocacy is consistent and yet agile, principled and practical, and always informed by your passionate commitment to providing justice for all. Thank you for all you have contributed to ATJ efforts in Hawaii. Because of your dedication to ATJ, I, on behalf of the Hawaii Supreme Court, Representative Della Au Belatti, on behalf of the legislature,

and Justice Acoba, on behalf of the ATJ Commission, would like to present you with certificates of recognition.

Gary, thank you again for all you have done and continue to do for ATJ efforts in Hawaii.