

A Tribute to our

# HONORABLE ALUMNI



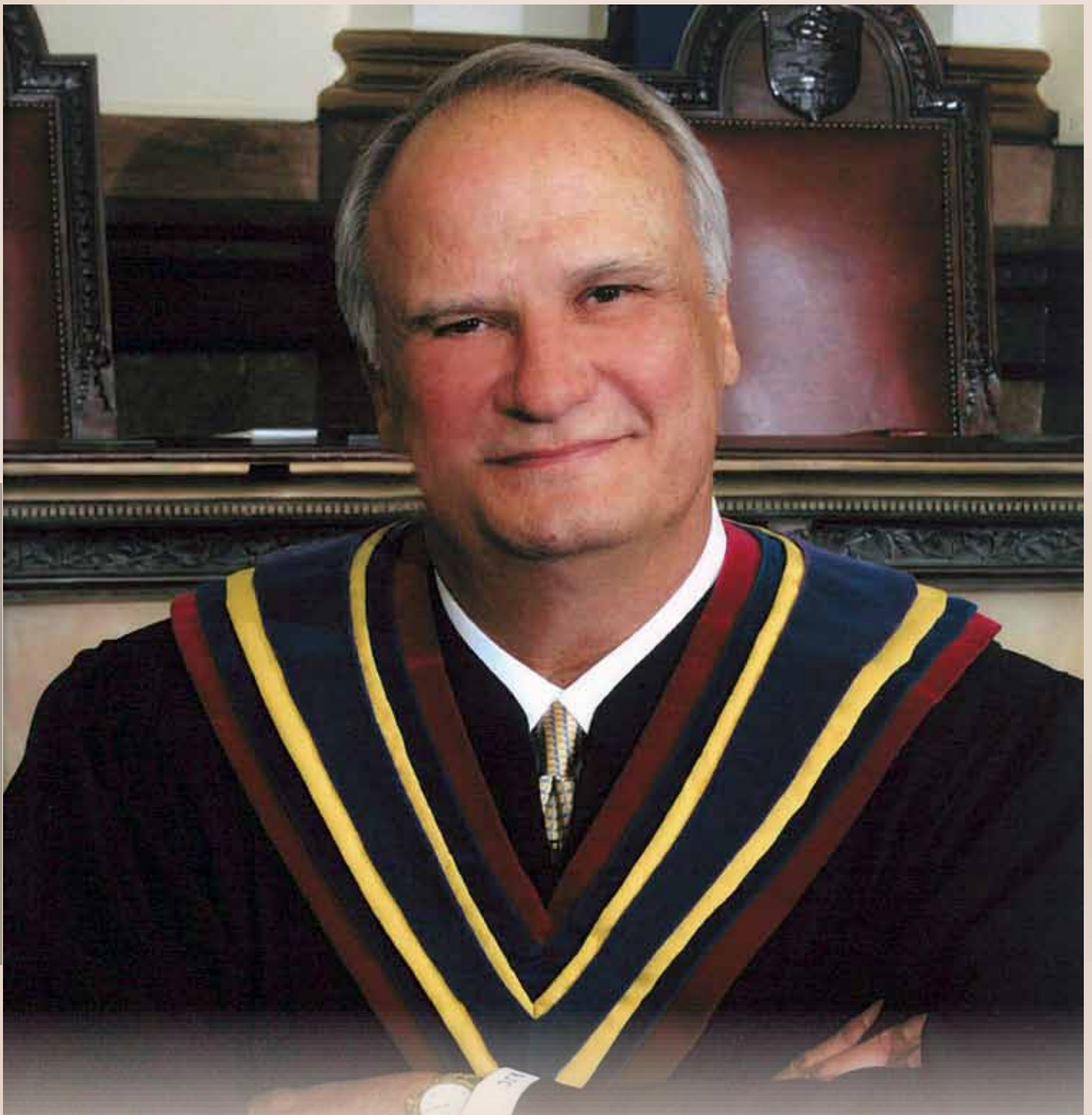
NLSA

Neighborhood Legal Services Association  
A public interest law firm  
Established 1966

LAWYERS ARE TRAINED TO TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE,  
TO MAKE SURE THE LAW IS USED THE WAY IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE USED.  
TO MAKE SURE THE POWERFUL DO NOT NECESSARILY WIN OUT OVER  
THE LESS POWERFUL. OR THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T TAKE AWAY  
CERTAIN INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS THAT WE ARE ALL GUARANTEED.  
SO I THINK THERE IS A SPECIAL OBLIGATION WHEN YOU ARE A TRAINED  
LAWYER TO TRY TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WHO CAN'T AFFORD YOUR  
SERVICES ARE PROVIDED WITH GOOD, COMPETENT SERVICE.

THE HONORABLE RALPH J. CAPPY  
FEBRUARY, 2009

Neighborhood Legal Services Association  
respectfully dedicates this commemorative tribute  
to the memory of an incomparable champion of justice —  
The Honorable Ralph J. Cappy  
1943 — 2009



## **The Late Honorable Ralph J. Cappy**

**Former Chief Justice Emeritus  
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania**

In the spring of 2009, the battle for equal access to justice lost an articulate voice and a great champion. The sudden passing of former Chief Justice Ralph J. Cappy left a void in the justice community and an ache in the hearts of all who knew this warm, compassionate and honorable man. A former NLSA board member, Chief Justice Cappy devoted the greater part of his life to public service and judicial reform.

His steadfast commitment to equality and fairness was evident throughout his career — from his early choice to serve in the Allegheny County Public Defender's Office to his principled tenure as Chief Justice of the highest court in our Commonwealth. We dedicate our Alumni Tribute to the memory of this fine jurist — and to the abiding standard he set for those who share his profession and his passion for equal justice under law.



## Message from the Executive Director

In 1966, fourteen visionary leaders established **Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA)**, embarking on a journey to equal access to justice for all residents of our region. Since then, NLSA has provided essential legal aid to more than one million individuals and families. In turn, that assistance has helped to stabilize neighborhoods and strengthen communities in four counties. We have helped families stay in their homes, stay together and stay warm through severe winters. We have helped individuals stay safe from brutal partners. We have preserved and obtained essential benefits for thousands in need and restored unfairly denied unemployment benefits to many in the ranks of the working poor. Most important, we have enabled clients to help themselves — a gift of dignity for which there is no substitute.

We take great pride in those achievements and in our dedicated staff and Board that have made it possible, through the years, to provide these vital services. Many of the exceptional men and women in the NLSA family became distinguished public officials and jurists. It is both fitting and gratifying that we mark our 45th year as a public interest law firm by celebrating the more than 50 former NLSA legal interns, staff, board members and incorporators whom we designate as honorable alumni.

In the pages that follow, you will meet them all. Yet no tribute of any length can contain the countless ways in which each has enriched our history, won respect for our program and advanced the cause of equal access to justice.

With the guidance and participation of these remarkable public servants over more than four decades, NLSA has both overcome obstacles and inspired extraordinary support. As challenges arose, our program grew more resourceful, evolving and changing with the times and economic conditions. As governmental support plummeted in the 1980s, NLSA turned to the private bar for financial assistance and for volunteer attorneys to

serve indigent clients on a pro bono basis. We deepened our partnerships with local bar associations and law schools. NLSA found ways to do more with fewer resources, such as installing a toll-free Helpline to quickly assist those who could benefit from service and advice by phone.

In the late 1990s, the corporate and foundation communities came together to enable NLSA to purchase our central office in Pittsburgh's cultural district and channel the savings into client service. To expand our capabilities, we solicited new partners and initiated innovative programs, such as Older & Wiser — recognized by the American College of Trial Lawyers with the 2010 International Emil Gumpert Award. We have developed a multifaceted approach to client service that includes community education, legal clinics and client self-help initiatives, as well as advice, representation and litigation. We have succeeded at all levels of the state and federal systems, including the United States Supreme Court.

Sadly, some of the esteemed alumni whom we honor, both for these achievements and for their enduring contributions to the justice community as a whole, are no longer with us. Yet their just and wise example lives on.

To the families of our late colleagues and to all of our honorable alumni, I am delighted to have this opportunity to say "thank you" on behalf of the many indigent and vulnerable members of our society whose lives have been touched by your integrity. Both during and following your formal relationship with NLSA, your principled and steadfast public service has moved our region ever closer to the ideal of equal access to justice for all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Robert V. Racunas". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

**Robert V. Racunas**  
Executive Director  
NLSA

# Pride of Generations

## GALLERY OF HONORABLE ALUMNI

1966 — 2011

Neighborhood Legal Services Association is eternally grateful to these dedicated public servants for their selfless contributions, over four decades, to ensuring that all people of our region have fair and equal access to justice.



The Honorable  
**Robert S. Adler**  
Commissioner  
U.S. Consumer Product  
Safety Commission

*Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney*

*Forty years after leaving NLSA, I still look back with gratitude for my life-changing experiences in this wonderful program. I joke that we were the front line in the War Against Poverty and poverty won; but I don't believe that at all. Legal services remains one of the greatest weapons that poor people have in dealing with a system stacked against them. I'm so proud of what we did at NLSA and what it continues to do today. I remain as committed to the cause of advancing consumer rights as when Tony Wettick first talked me into it all those years ago.*



The Honorable  
**Cheryl Lynn Allen**  
Judge  
Superior Court  
of Pennsylvania

*Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney*

*The experience I gained working at Neighborhood Legal Services Association for the benefit of those who most need the law - the indigent, the disadvantaged, and the disenfranchised -- was incredibly rewarding. NLSA provided me with an excellent background for my subsequent work as a practicing attorney and as a juvenile and appellate court judge. NLSA is such an important organization because it works to benefit not just individuals, but our society as a whole.*



The Honorable  
**Donetta W. Ambrose**  
Senior Judge  
U.S. District Court  
Western District of  
Pennsylvania

*Former NLSA  
Legal Intern*

*I grew up in the sixties and I did have this real, legitimate call to do something with my education to help people who needed resolution. NLSA exceeded my expectations. We saw real results for real problems and the people I worked with and for were wonderful. It was a great learning experience.*



The Honorable  
**Melissa A. Amodie**  
Magisterial District Judge  
Lawrence County

*Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney*

*It was a privilege to represent the clients of NLSA. I did not realize the great need and demand for legal representation of these clients until my work with NLSA.*



The Honorable  
**Cynthia A. Baldwin**  
Former Justice  
Supreme Court  
of Pennsylvania

*Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney and  
Reginald Heber Smith Fellow*

*Our justice system remains one of the best in the world. It is mandatory that access to that system not be limited by race, ethnicity, gender, religion, finances or class.*



The Honorable  
**E. Lynise Bryant-Weekes**  
Judge  
36th Judicial District Court  
State of Michigan

*Former NLSA  
Legal Intern*

*NLSA cultivated my passion for people and helped me maintain and acquire greater empathy for the situations of the citizens I am now elected to serve as Judge of the 36th District Court. The experience was invaluable.*



The Honorable  
**James S. Bukes**  
Administrative Law Judge  
Social Security  
Administration

*Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney*

*We were very busy in the years (1968-71) that I worked at NLSA's McKeesport office. I often saw a dozen new clients a day. I learned a lot about the law and the practice of law from my dedicated and brilliant colleagues — Morris Mendlowitz, John Cook, and Bob Racunas. I also learned a lot about people from my interactions with residents of the McKeesport area. My experience with NLSA helped me throughout my career as a trial attorney and supervisory trial attorney with the EEOC and as a federal administrative law judge.*



The Late Honorable  
**Ralph J. Cappy**  
Former Chief Justice Emeritus  
Supreme Court  
of Pennsylvania

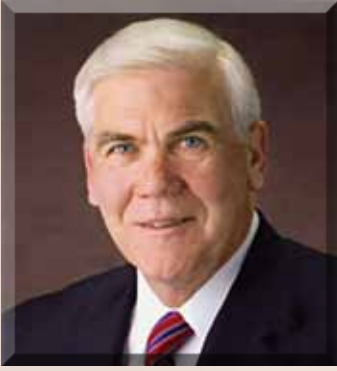
*Former NLSA  
Board Member*



The Honorable  
**Jerry G. Cartwright**  
Magisterial District Judge  
Lawrence County

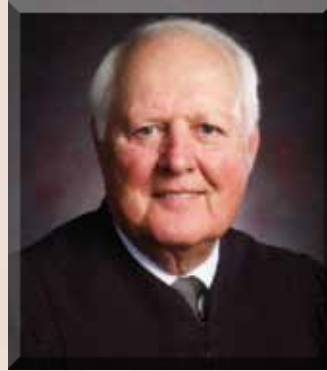
*Former NLSA  
Board Member*

*My association with NLSA helped me to be a part of the hopes and aspirations of our great nation. I am most fortunate to be a part of this wonderful organization and have made many good friends that I will cherish for a lifetime.*



The Honorable  
**Robert J. Cindrich**  
 Former Judge  
 U.S. District Court  
 Western District  
 of Pennsylvania  
 Former U.S. Attorney  
 Western Pennsylvania  
**Former NLSA  
 Legal Intern**

*What I learned from my brief work as an NLSA intern in 1967 was that the law can be used as a tool of liberation. It liberates when it raises consciousness, confronts misdirected power and mediates between the classes. When we use the law for this noble purpose, jurisprudence is lifted beyond the reductionist position many assign it to and it embodies the highest aspirations of human kind. I took that lesson with me to every other legal office I ever occupied.*



The Honorable  
**Robert E. Colville**  
 Senior Judge  
 Superior Court  
 of Pennsylvania  
  
**Former NLSA  
 Legal Intern**

*I found my time at NLSA as a legal intern to have been very rewarding and a wonderful learning experience. Having been born and raised in Manchester on the North Side of the city, it was even more gratifying to work out of the North Side office. I have always remembered that summer as very special.*



The Honorable  
**Deborah E. Comay**  
 Former Judge  
 Pittsburgh Housing Court  
  
**Former NLSA  
 Staff Attorney**



The Honorable  
**Jay Costa**  
 State Senator, 43rd District  
 Democratic Floor Leader  
 Pennsylvania Senate  
  
**NLSA Board Member**

*One of our principal roles is to create laws and as we do that, we need to think about whether those laws could result in potential barriers or limitations for people attempting to access the courts. We don't want to make it more difficult for people to resolve disputes. Serving on NLSA's board has helped me to keep those issues always in mind.*



The Honorable  
**David B. Fawcett**  
 Former Judge  
 Allegheny County Court  
 of Common Pleas  
  
**Former NLSA  
 Board President**

*I believe that as professionals, lawyers have an obligation to use their skills to assist individuals and families without sufficient financial means who face critical legal allegations. NLSA of Allegheny County was one of the first formal efforts in the USA to see that indigent, law-abiding citizens were provided proper legal representation. It, along with many, many volunteer lawyers, over the years, have contributed untold pro bono hours of legal work to try to accomplish the goal of adequate representation for the indigent.*



The Late Honorable  
**Marion K. Finkelhor**  
 Former Judge  
 Allegheny County Court  
 of Common Pleas  
  
**Former NLSA  
 Board Member**



The Honorable  
**Paula Fow**  
 Chief Administrative  
 Law Judge  
 Hearing Office  
 Social Security  
 Administration  
 Denver, Colorado

**Former NLSA  
 Staff Attorney**

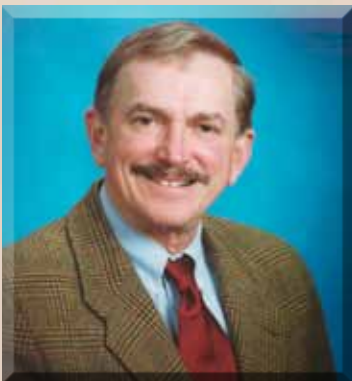
*NLSA helped me to understand the needs and wants of the indigent. This has served me well in my career with the Social Security Administration in that I am able to be more compassionate in my approach. NLSA provided a strong foundation from which I could work.*



The Honorable  
**J. Richard Gray**  
 Mayor  
 City of Lancaster,  
 Pennsylvania

**Former NLSA  
 Staff Attorney**

*My time at NLSA introduced me to a vibrant community that fought to overcome poverty and discrimination. I found that justice too often was determined by income. The people I met while with NLSA affected my life and taught me lessons that still resonate with me today.*



The Honorable  
**Chester T. Harhut**  
 Judge  
 Lackawana County  
 Court of Common Pleas

**Former NLSA  
 Legal Intern**

*My experience with NLSA taught me that many people need help and you never feel as good as when you help someone in need.*



The Honorable  
**Marilyn J. Horan**  
 Judge  
 Butler County  
 Court of Common Pleas

**Former NLSA  
 Legal Intern**

*I served as a legal intern with NLSA during my law school years. The staff in the Butler office were my first mentors in all aspects of legal practice. The most notable influences from my experience were in the areas of ethics and compassion for clients and their circumstances.*



The Late Honorable  
**Alexander J. Jaffurs**  
 Former Mayor  
 Wilkensburg, Pennsylvania  
 Former Solicitor  
 Allegheny County

**Former NLSA  
 Board Member**

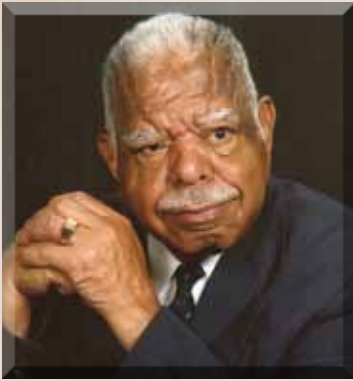


The Honorable  
**Conrad A. Johnson**  
 Administrative Law Judge  
 Pennsylvania Public Utility  
 Commission

**Former NLSA  
 Staff Attorney**

*In a 1963 letter from Birmingham jail, The Reverend Martin Luther King wrote: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." NLSA strives for justice for those least able to access our judicial system. Congratulations on 45 years.*

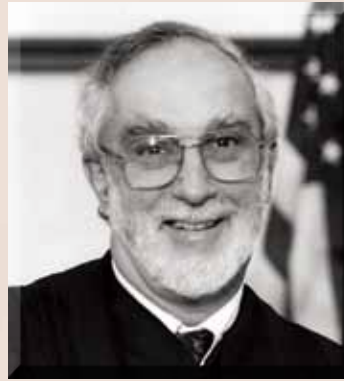




The Honorable  
**Justin M. Johnson**  
Former Judge  
Superior Court  
of Pennsylvania

***NLSA Incorporator and  
Former Board President***

*The selfless devotion and professionalism displayed by NLSA attorneys reflects credit on all of us engaged in the law. NLSA remains a vital, indispensable part of the delivery of legal services here in Allegheny County. All of us live in a much better community because of the battles NLSA has fought and won on behalf of its clients.*



The Honorable  
**John B. Leete**  
Senior Judge  
Potter County  
Court of Common Pleas

***Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney***

*Neighborhood Legal Services was a defining time in my legal career. I have never forgotten what I learned there about how the law could be used to bring about a more just and open society.*



The Honorable  
**Timothy K. Lewis**  
Former Judge  
U.S. Court of Appeals  
Third Circuit

***Former NLSA  
Legal Intern***

*As an intern in NLSA's Homewood office, I had the opportunity to actually represent a person at a hearing, once I was certified to do so. That experience catapulted my confidence and made my mission clear: I wanted to use our profession to help people and to improve society. That has never changed. Today I try to offer young law students and lawyers the confidence and clarity I was blessed with so many years ago. I am forever grateful.*



The Late Honorable  
**Maurice Louik**  
Former Judge  
Allegheny County  
Court of Common Pleas

***NLSA Incorporator***



The Honorable  
**Tom M. Lytton**  
Appellate Justice  
Third District Illinois  
Appellate Court

***Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney***

*In my years at NLSA, I met many eager young lawyers like myself, several of whom I still consider good friends. It was a heady time in Pittsburgh in NLSA, when everything seemed possible. It was there that, with the help of Ron Wilson and Tony Wettick, I began to understand the practice of law in the real world.*



The Honorable  
**Lee J. Mazur**  
Senior Judge  
Allegheny County  
Court of Common Pleas

***Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney***

*I am thankful for the opportunity to have served as one of NLSA's original staff attorneys. The knowledge I gained gave me a greater appreciation for those in need and those who provide all public service, but especially those who work for and support NLSA. The experience also has been invaluable throughout my career as a private attorney, a community college professor, a district judge and a judge in the Court of Common Pleas.*



*"I was a child of the sixties and I truly thought I was going to graduate from law school and save the world. Neighborhood Legal Services seemed like a good place to start!"*

## **The Honorable Donetta Ambrose**

Senior Judge, U.S. District Court - Western District of Pennsylvania

*Former NLSA Legal Intern (Summer, 1969)*

## The passion that drove Donetta Ambrose to public service in the summer of 1969 can still light up a room.

Finished with her second year at Duquesne School of Law and “full of myself,” Ambrose landed a legal intern position at NLSA. She could hardly wait to begin righting wrongs.

“I was a child of the sixties and I truly thought I was going to graduate from law school and save the world. Neighborhood Legal Services seemed like a good place to start!”

At NLSA’s Brighton Road office, her definition of “lawyering” quickly took on new dimensions. In fact, Ambrose found herself “trying to achieve practical solutions” that were not entirely dependent on legal skills. “You’re not necessarily using what you learned in Constitutional Law or Anti-Trust, but what you’ve learned cumulatively about how to negotiate and how to mediate and how to reach resolution. Helping an ordinary person resolve a very real problem was more satisfying to me, at that time, than a big fee. I don’t know if I would have had that same satisfaction from sitting in a large law firm researching one issue in a 100-page brief.”

Satisfaction was not all that the future jurist took from her time at NLSA. Those long ago experiences with landlord tenant matters, neighborhood disputes and residents “who needed a lot of social service help” was the seed stock of her judicial temperament.

“For me, NLSA was the beginning of understanding that you have to listen to people. That no matter how small their problems are they are large to that person. That they must be treated with dignity and respect. I try to do that in court. I try to treat everyone with respect and courtesy. I try to understand that these are people who come into this courtroom with problems, and that they deserve attention and consideration from me and from everyone else involved in the process.”

Those fortunate enough to come before Judge Ambrose today can count on her respectful contemplation of their issues. The first hurdle for low-income civil litigants, however, is accessing her courtroom at all. Judge Ambrose hears numerous cases pro se, although she is not certain as to how those numbers may have changed since she was elected to the bench 18 years ago. What she does know for sure is that they — and all other residents of her district, regardless of economic circumstances — have the indisputable right to be there.

“It is so important that we as a profession are conscious of the fact that we must provide equal access to the courts for everyone. This is why we are the United States of America

instead of Iran or Iraq. Organizations like NLSA have done a spectacular job; but NLSA can’t represent every pro se litigant in federal court. We have many members of the bar who have worked long and hard to see that access is sustained. But funding is really the only way we can ensure access. We have to pay a bill to have a Bill of Rights.”

That said, Judge Ambrose also believes it is the obligation of the justice community to do a better job of instilling those basic principles. In her view, a public education campaign around justice would have to “start young.”

“I read so much in the papers about school students not even understanding that we have three branches of government, let alone independent judiciaries or concepts like equal access to justice. When we have people out there talking about impeaching judges who make decisions they don’t like, or people who don’t think everyone should have the right to representation, or who think that lawyers shouldn’t represent people charged with terrible crimes — this is all very scary to me. I think there’s a certain mean-spiritedness permeating some sections of society: ‘I’ve got mine so you’re on your own to get yours.’ Frankly, very few of us ‘got ours’ without help from somebody else.”

Nevertheless, Judge Ambrose is an optimist “by nature.” She is “impressed by the bar’s willingness to step up and help” and points to pro bono commitments of law firms, large and small, and the “smart young lawyers” who are getting early trial experience as a result. She is encouraged by a new generation of judicial talent that has contributed substantially in the area of equal justice. As one example, she cites former NLSA Board President and Equal Justice Campaign Chair Maureen P. Kelly, who “we just picked” to become a magistrate judge. Judge Ambrose also admires former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor for her ongoing and forthright statements in support of an independent judiciary and access to the courts.

As for her own advocacy, Judge Ambrose has never been one to sit quietly in “an ivory tower dispensing justice and judging.” Nor does she expect to become a back-bencher, now that she has taken Senior status in federal court to “give someone else an opportunity to have this job.”

“I hope I will never stop speaking out about issues that are near and dear to me. We just need to keep bringing the importance of open courts to the forefront. When we are cutting budgets we have to think about what is fundamental. To me, access to justice is fundamental.”



**Standing before her portrait\* under the rotunda of “Old Main,” Penn State University Vice President and General Counsel Cynthia Baldwin is a formidable presence.**

In truth, the context is irrelevant. Wherever she stands, The Honorable Cynthia Baldwin is the powerhouse you want on your side.

That may not be how she would describe herself in 1980, fresh out of law school, defending her first client in court on her first day on the job with NLSA. “I think the judge took pity on this woman in her navy blue lawyer uniform with her knees knocking together and just signed the motion preventing eviction of my client. My client thought I was a hero and I thought, ‘Doing that felt pretty good!’”

The die was cast. During her year with NLSA, Cynthia Baldwin would assist many more indigent clients in civil legal crises and deepen her conviction that all people must be able to access our courts with quality representation at their side.

“NLSA changed my whole life. I had planned to go into real estate law. Instead, I fell in love with fighting for people and became a trial lawyer.”

She became that and much more. As a litigator, as attorney-in-charge in Pennsylvania’s Western Regional Office of Attorney General, Bureau of Consumer Protection, as a Common Pleas judge, a justice on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and judicial educator worldwide — in fact, from every point on her career path Cynthia Baldwin has been a passionate advocate for equal access to justice under law.

“I believe that the reason I was elected a judge is because the people of Allegheny County know how committed I am to the concept that the court should be a place that is respected and has respect for those who come in, and everyone has a right to come in. When I was on the bench, many times they would send pro se litigants to me because they knew I would listen to them and give them a fair trial. That’s what this system is all about.”

Baldwin finds it troubling, however, that our system’s constitutional guarantee of equal access is not equally well supported by those with the political power to ensure it. “We need to look at what we say we are as a country and stop politicizing what occurs.

When people come in the door of Neighborhood Legal Services, no one cares whether they are black or white, what their race or ethnicity is. No one cares what their religion is or whether they even have one. No one cares whether they are Republican, Democrat, libertarian, independent, Green Party — no one cares! And therefore, the people who look at (legal services) should stop looking at it through those kinds of lenses.”

While acknowledging the legislative and financial blows that have eroded the capacity of legal services, Baldwin prefers to focus on preserving what remains. In her view, an important part of realizing that objective involves educating the public about what NLSA is and why it is important to sustain it.

“People need to understand that NLSA provides quality legal representation and their attorneys are well educated, dedicated and committed. They also need to understand the impact of losing those services. Think of the medical, psychological and economic costs to society when low-income families are denied essential benefits or lose their homes; or when the elderly or women — along with their children — have to stay in abusive situations.”

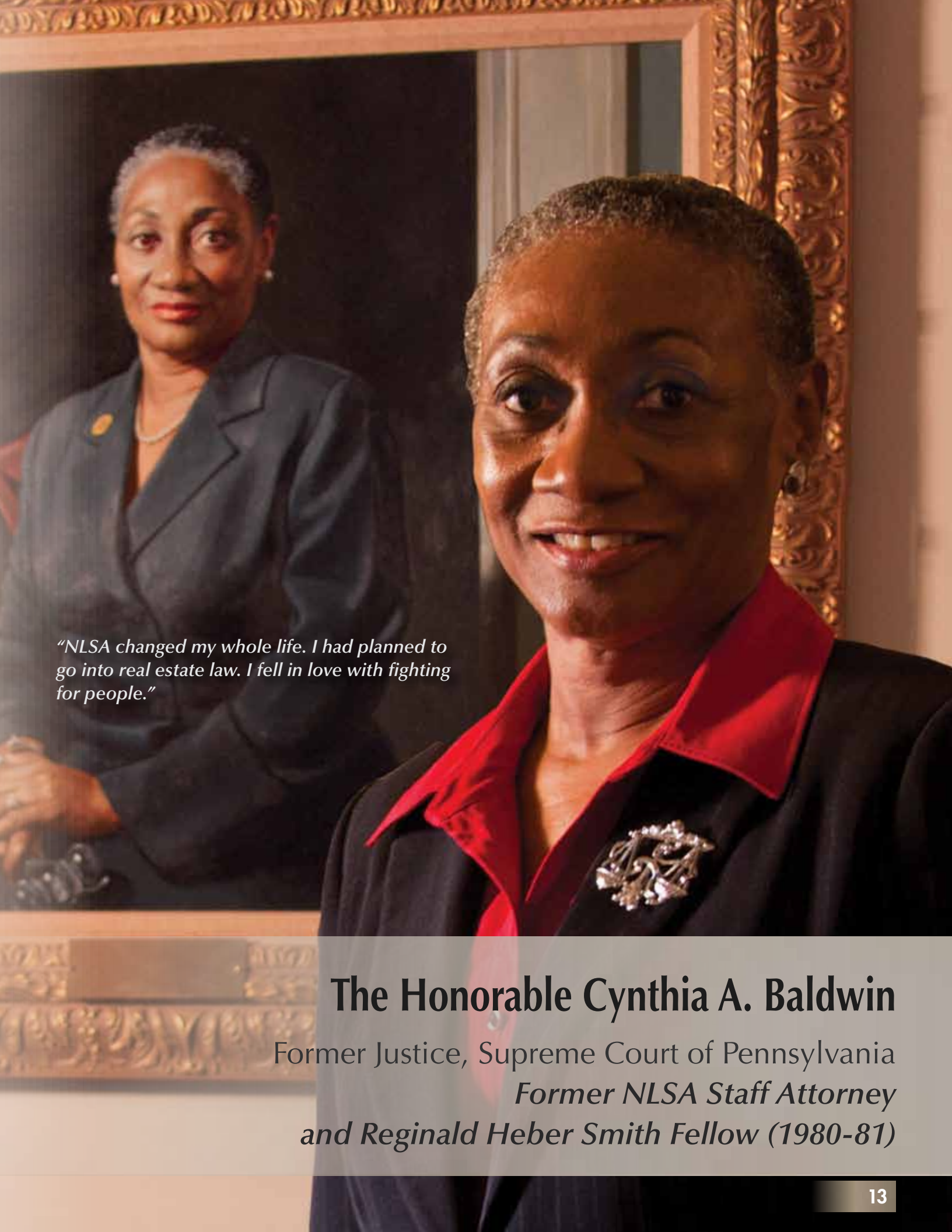
Even more crucial says Baldwin is vigilance. I think we have to be very, very careful that there are no further restrictions on NLSA’s ability to offer the services people need. It may not be what we had 40 years ago, but what we have left is extremely valuable. They talk about the “silent majority.” You know, you never miss your water until your well runs dry. What does that say about us if we let that occur?”

That’s not likely to happen on her watch. Always an exceedingly active member of the Allegheny County Bar Association, Baldwin is a relentless proponent of the obligation of lawyers, locally and nationwide, to render public service.

“In this wonderful country of ours, it is upsetting to believe that the wealthy not only have better access to the courts, but better representation. The more we in the legal community can do — whether it is to support legal services or contribute our services pro bono, the more we live up to the constitutional promise of equal access to open courts.”



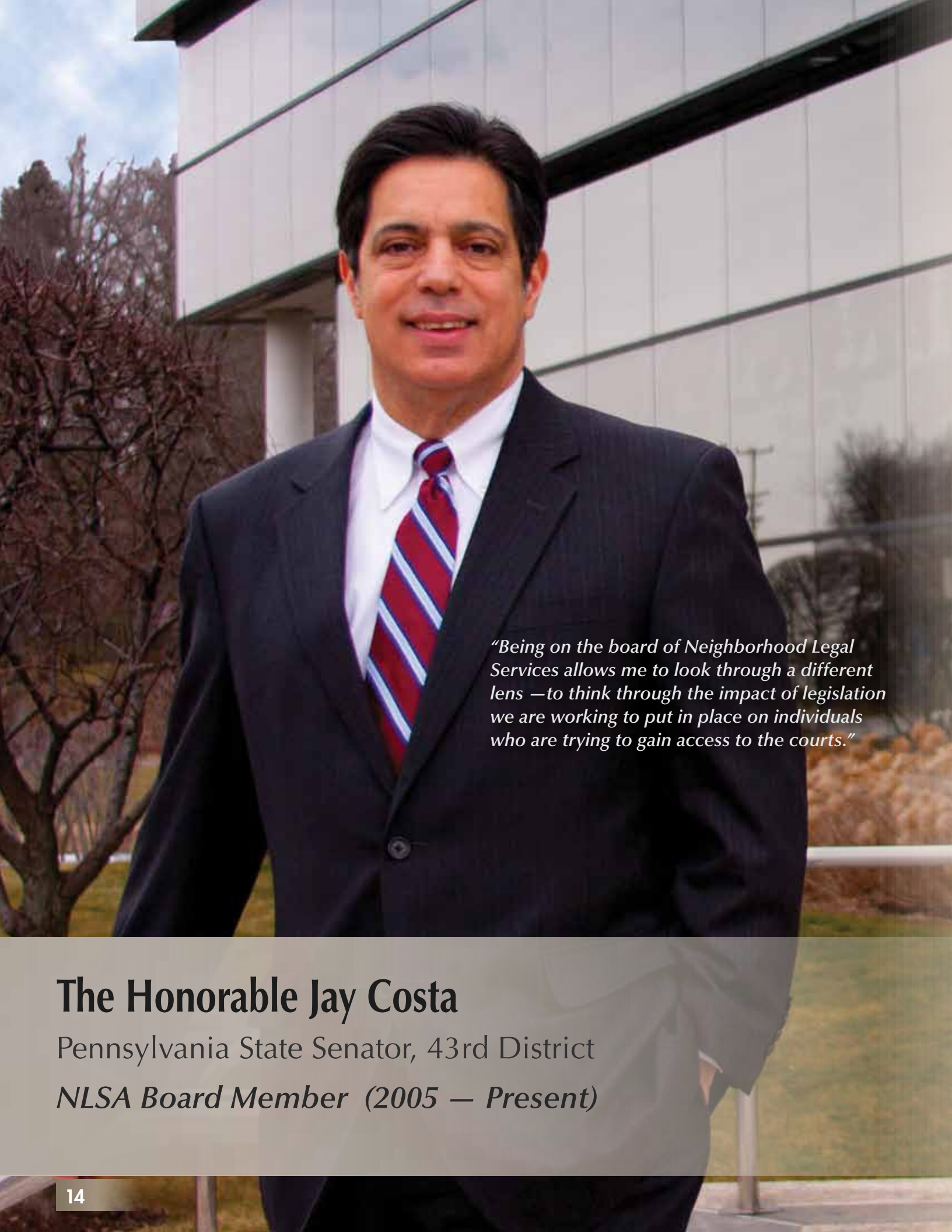
\*It is traditional for chairs of PSU’s Board of Trustees to commission and donate a self-portrait to hang in the lobby of the historic Old Main building on the Penn State campus. Cynthia Baldwin chaired the Board of Trustees from 2004-2007.



*“NLSA changed my whole life. I had planned to go into real estate law. I fell in love with fighting for people.”*

## **The Honorable Cynthia A. Baldwin**

*Former Justice, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania  
Former NLSA Staff Attorney  
and Reginald Heber Smith Fellow (1980-81)*



*“Being on the board of Neighborhood Legal Services allows me to look through a different lens —to think through the impact of legislation we are working to put in place on individuals who are trying to gain access to the courts.”*

## **The Honorable Jay Costa**

Pennsylvania State Senator, 43rd District

*NLSA Board Member (2005 — Present)*

**Bearing the Costa name in Allegheny County sets a high bar for public service. State Senator Jay Costa clears it easily, today and long before he entered politics.**

“My family has been involved in public service for decades and early on we knew we had an obligation to give back. As a young lawyer, I committed time to working on pro bono cases. I saw that giving back to the profession was important and it stuck with me.”

Some years later, the civic-minded interests of Attorney Costa and Senator Costa would come together seamlessly in NLSA’s Older & Wiser program — a public education initiative uniting legislators and lawyers in providing free neighborhood seminars on topics of vital importance to older adults.

“Having attorneys out there in the community speaking about some of these issues to provide information instead of looking for business was a concept that I thought made sense. I’ve had the pleasure of participating in the program as a presenter and also hosting events on timely topics, such as Medicare Part D and how to deal with nursing homes.”

Moving from NLSA program volunteer to NLSA board participant was a natural next step for Senator Costa. The mission aligned with his interests and he was particularly pleased with the composition of the board.

“You have different focus groups, so to speak. You have attorneys from big firms and small firms. You’ve got folks from the community who make sure we’re providing representation to the residents of those communities. I think it’s a really appropriate way to address legal services in a neighborhood setting.”

Senator Costa also finds that board membership blends effectively with his duties in the legislature. “Being on the board of Neighborhood Legal Services allows me to look through a different lens — to think through the impact of legislation we are working to put in place on individuals who are trying to gain access to the courts.”

During more than 15 years representing Pennsylvania’s 43<sup>rd</sup> district, Senator Costa has earned a reputation for turning advocacy into action. Nowhere is that record more apparent than in his efforts to ensure continued funding of legal services. “State legislatures have an obligation to provide the resources to allow legal services programs to reach out to the community and do what they are designed to do. If we restrict those resources across the Commonwealth, we are not helping our justice system at all.” To prevent that outcome, Senator Costa is working in both his board and legislative capacities to further extend the Access to Justice Act, or preferably, establish it as a permanent source of dedicated funding for legal services.

Part of that effort involves awareness and education; and Senator Costa is doing his part in that arena, as well. “We don’t have the same number of attorneys in the General Assembly as we’ve had in years past. The number is dwindling. So it requires guys like myself to play a more active role in working to share with my colleagues information about the need for and value of legal services in our communities.”

It is also “guys like himself” who will help meet the need for legal services when funding falls short. If the law is for all, according to Senator Costa, then lawyers have a special obligation to make it so by donating expertise, as well as dollars. “I would ask my colleagues to continue to volunteer their services to clients that need our help. We are privileged to be attorneys in this Commonwealth and in this country and we owe something back to the profession and the community.”

As for the newest generation of lawyers for whom school debt may trump all other forms of payback—Senator Costa has this message: “As a young attorney working on a pro bono case, you are literally enhancing your skills at the same time you’re providing a service to someone who otherwise would not have their day in court.” In Senator Costa’s world, it doesn’t get much better than that.



**As a jurist, The Honorable Justin M. Johnson was accustomed to ruling on matters that came before him only after meticulous deliberation.**

As a man of principle, deciding matters of conviction takes no time at all. A case in point would be the landmark decision he made in 1966, long before his appointment to the bench.

Just a few years out of law school, Johnson attended a special membership meeting of the Allegheny County Bar Association as a self-described “observer, rather than a key mover and shaker.” Nevertheless, when the establishment of Neighborhood Legal Services Association was put to the group, Johnson immediately cast an affirmative vote. The motion carried — far from unanimously — instituting a professional program of civil legal assistance for indigent residents of Allegheny County.

“At the time, there were questions as to which portions of the law could be addressed by legal services,” said Johnson. “The bar association generally felt that if we are going to have a War on Poverty program, let’s try to confine it to those areas that are popularly perceived as areas of intense need for the poor. But for me, the issue of whether we should have legal representation for the poor at all was a no-brainer.”

Johnson was among the 14 visionaries who signed Articles of Incorporation establishing NLSA and went on to join and ultimately chair NLSA’s board. To this day, he believes those honors so early in his career belong to his father, the distinguished Pittsburgh attorney Oliver L. Johnson.

“They could have been looking at me in terms of using the Johnson name — my father’s name, certainly not mine — as someone willing to participate on some level of integrity. I have no recollection of being asked ‘would you like to do this?’ I can only say that I wouldn’t have needed to be coached. It was something that I thought was important and I was happy to have that opportunity.”

Opportunity flowed both ways. For Johnson, serving with NLSA was an eye-opener — not in terms of the unmet need for legal assistance. He was raised in a family “where the children were kept aware of the downtrodden.” His epiphanies on the board relate to the legal community as a whole.

“The board intentionally included lawyers across ideological grounds. Having the opportunity to hear cross arguments and seeing that the people making arguments counter to mine were still quite respectable and respected people in the bar, helped move me along. It gave me interaction with members of the bar whom, in my practice, I would not have run into that early in my career; and it permitted me to find that there were good guys as well as bad guys all over the terrain of the legal field.”



As for opportunity to advance the mandate of NLSA in those first years, Judge Johnson is more circumspect. “When I was on the board, I don’t remember our thinking about or wanting to move the envelope. I think all we were trying to do was establish credibility to prove that we could comply with all federal guidelines and so on. From a political standpoint, NLSA was a creature of the Allegheny County Bar Association and there were attempts to keep it exactly where it was when it was founded.”

The irony, according to Judge Johnson, is that those who defend an inequitable status quo, whether it affects women, minorities, the poor or any other group, ultimately share in the benefits of improvement. “If you look at the data everybody wins,” says Johnson, pointing, as one example, to the broad based opportunities created by the model school integration case brought by NLSA in federal court.

“The school integration case would never have come forward without NLSA, in part because it takes lawyers who know what they’re doing. And (NLSA Executive Director) Wettick had people in Neighborhood Legal Services then, and we have them now, who are qualified attorneys. That case couldn’t have happened at the time NLSA was trying to get on its feet.”

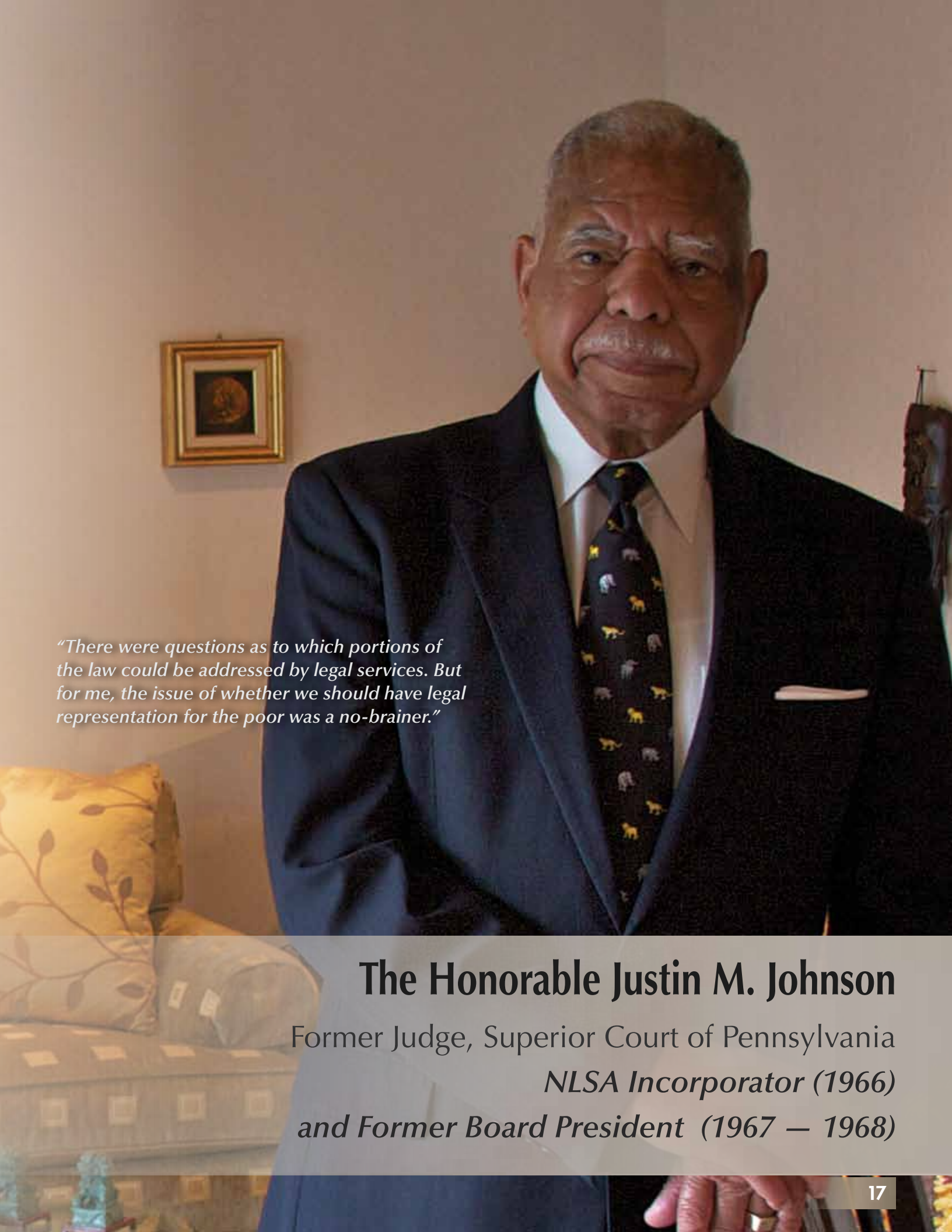
The political attempts Judge Johnson cites to keep the nascent legal services organization “in its place” foreshadowed the funding cuts and legislative restrictions that would come less than two decades later. In addition to those formidable institutional barriers to equal access, Johnson blames a failure to enlist public support by effectively conveying “the needs of the low-income community” to the public.

“It’s probably no different from getting people to understand that universal healthcare is a good thing or that children are entitled to receive sufficient food so that they don’t suffer from malnutrition. We’re coming up on 25% of children now in poverty as defined by the federal government. They say you can tell where a country’s heart is by looking at its budget. If you did that in 2011 in the United States you would say that we are a pretty hard-hearted nation.”

That dispiriting conclusion does not prevent Judge Johnson from continuing his lifelong habit of community service — on and off the bench. “I think it’s wrong for a judge to withdraw from or refuse to participate in community activities just because he is on the bench. When you deal with members of the community, you deal with all aspects of their life. You can’t have someone come to you for a legal issue and believe that there’s nothing important but the narrow words of the law and a few things that may have been said in court. Things don’t occur in a vacuum. Not only is it permissible for judges to be involved in community life; in my judgment, they’re not a complete person unless they do.”

For the co-founder of legal services for the poor in western Pennsylvania, that too, is a matter of conviction.



A portrait of Justin M. Johnson, an older man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is standing in a room with a framed picture on the wall behind him and a patterned sofa to the left.

*“There were questions as to which portions of the law could be addressed by legal services. But for me, the issue of whether we should have legal representation for the poor was a no-brainer.”*

## **The Honorable Justin M. Johnson**

Former Judge, Superior Court of Pennsylvania

*NLSA Incorporator (1966)*

*and Former Board President (1967 – 1968)*



*“Serving with NLSA gave me a much greater understanding of...the problems associated with effective legal representation for the indigent. It is something we struggle with, especially at the appellate level.”*

## **The Honorable Jacqueline O. Shogan**

Judge, Superior Court of Pennsylvania

*Former NLSA Board Member (2003 – 2008)*

## You might say that Judge Jacqueline Shogan earned her formidable credentials in *caring*.

The passion to ensure access to essential human services binds a much-honored career that began in nursing, evolved into the practice of health law (among other areas) and settled most recently in the judiciary with her election to the Pennsylvania Superior Court. The trajectory for her professional life ignited at an early age.

“As a teenager I was very involved in volunteering with the physically and mentally disabled. That kindled my interest in healthcare and in the legal issues that population deals with. I thought maybe someday I could do something to help their situation. But when I graduated from high school (becoming a lawyer) was not something I was encouraged to do because, at the time, not many women were going to law school. But, the fire kept burning.”

In fact, nursing only increased her ardor for the law. During more than a decade as a staff nurse, clinical nurse specialist and clinical instructor at major teaching hospitals, Judge Shogan observed healthcare barriers first hand. “Access was always an issue in terms of healthcare services. I saw that there was an important correlation with legal services, because without access it is hard to obtain justice” in that sector or in any other.

In 1990, with JD in hand, this self-described “second career lawyer” began to combat in court the inequities she had first detected as a teen. Much of that effort took the form of handling complex civil litigation with Thorp, Reed & Armstrong, a law firm actively involved in the leadership of Neighborhood Legal Services Association. It was inevitable that Judge Shogan would follow suit, welcoming the opportunity to partner with NLSA to pursue shared objectives.

“NLSA seemed uniquely positioned to effectively meet the legal needs of the indigent in our area. It provides a very necessary service to southwestern Pennsylvania, especially during these tough economic times. I also was impressed with how they worked to engage our firm. A number of our attorneys had assumed leadership roles with NLSA. So when Mark Nowak and Maureen Kelly mentioned to me that (board membership) might be a good fit, I immediately became very engaged.”

Like others who have served with NLSA prior to entering public life, Judge Shogan credits those experiences with further informing her views on matters about which

she cares deeply. “It gave me a much greater understanding of how difficult it is for indigent people to get the help they need to navigate our legal system. Now, in my role as a judge it gives me greater insight into the problems associated with effective legal representation in our court system. It is something we struggle with, especially at the appellate level, because we don’t have as well organized pro bono programs as those you see at the trial court level.”

Judge Shogan frequently encounters that void in her courtroom in cases involving contract law, landlord/tenant issues and especially in family court matters. “Family law issues are very difficult. Some of these families appear before us time after time and there are limited resources; so a fair number of these people end up representing themselves. Even though they have the right to appear pro se, it is very difficult to represent yourself in our legal system.”

To help address that inequity, Judge Shogan has participated in a number of committees, including the ACBA Appellate Practice Committee. “We’ve talked about the need for setting up some form of volunteer program for indigent litigants at the appellate level to have access to pro bono volunteers. We thought it would be a good opportunity for relatively new lawyers who wanted to get before the court and also perform a community service.”

In Judge Shogan’s view, successfully engaging young lawyers as volunteer attorneys requires getting them involved at an early stage in their careers. “I think it’s important to work with the law schools and get law students to realize that part of the practice and profession of law is helping to meet these needs. To help them understand that, as volunteers, you often get back more than you give.”

With a record of community service that reaches back to her student days at Gateway High School, Judge Shogan speaks from experience. She also speaks with confidence about the future of legal services. “I think we have made great strides. I know that sometimes it’s discouraging because of the funding issues that arise. But I think NLSA has made a huge impact

over time with increasing access to legal services. I commend the tireless efforts that the staff, the volunteer attorneys and the clients put forth on a daily basis. Compared to what these folks have done, I’ve been a bit player.”

‘To the contrary,’ NLSA would argue. On and off the bench, few have done more than Judge Jacqueline Shogan to ensure that the law is for all.



**Just six years after he began to practice law, Assistant City Solicitor Gene Strassburger stood before the U.S. Supreme Court to ensure equality of opportunity.**

"I peaked early," he said, referring to the 1973 case he successfully argued to stop the Pittsburgh Press from advertising gender-specific want ads.

Decades later, Judge Strassburger has yet to peak as a champion of equal opportunity — including the opportunity for all people to access legal assistance regardless of economic circumstances.

"In my 32 plus years in Common Pleas Court, I had numerous cases that were pro se, mostly in the housing arena, and these could be very complicated. I would call Neighborhood Legal Services (for pro bono representation) and these matters settled favorably because there was an attorney present. With someone on the other side sticking up for the little person, it's a different ballgame."

Then and now, a call to NLSA from Judge Strassburger is a call from "family." He formed those relationships in the early 1970s when the City Solicitor appointed him to NLSA's board, ostensibly because he was "one of the more liberal members of the city law department." Ironically, he also was considered "one of the more fiscally conservative members" of NLSA's board.

"I was not a big fan of conferences and I would sometimes vote against travel expenditures. I wasn't entirely popular with other board members because of that." On matters that helped NLSA move the needle on access to justice, however, Judge Strassburger was unquestionably one of the Board's most valued members.

"I think I helped to bridge the gap between the city administration and Neighborhood Legal Services Association. It was no secret that the administration at the time was not all that favorable in its views toward the poor. I brought a view from a part of the power structure that what legal services was doing was important."



Judge Strassburger went on to serve as that critical connection for over six years, until Governor Milton Shapp appointed him to the bench in Allegheny County. He left NLSA, he believes, "more well rounded" and better able to envision the barriers to access on "the other side of the tracks."

Today, Judge Strassburger continues to feel the presence of NLSA, both in his courtroom and throughout the legal community. "Almost uniformly the Neighborhood Legal Services attorneys that appear before me do a good job. Many have gone on to become terrific attorneys in other areas, and they still retain the knowledge of what poor people go through."


Of course, raising awareness is not the same as ensuring access. "Any judge will tell you in all areas of the law there are more pro se litigants than in the past; and one of the reasons is that legal services has fewer attorneys. Obviously, it's not what it used to be. Supporters have to feel like the little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike holding back the North Sea."

Noting that legal services has been fighting for funding throughout most of its history, Judge Strassburger sees little hope of change any time soon. What he does see is an obligation for both current and future generations of lawyers to fill the void.

"I know that Yale has a program, and I'm sure other schools do as well, that will forgive your education debts after ten years if you go into public interest law. That's the sort of thing that will send young lawyers in the direction of organizations like Neighborhood Legal Services, if indeed there are any jobs available."

As for attorneys already in practice, Judge Strassburger endorses a recent statement by Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronald Castille calling for lawyers to do more pro bono work. "That's what you need," said Judge Strassburger, "leaders of the legal community using a bully pulpit."

With courage and candor, Judge Strassburger has done that and more over a long career of helping to balance the scales of justice for all residents of our region.



*“I think I was a bridge between the city administration and Neighborhood Legal Services Association. I brought a view from a part of the power structure that what legal services was doing was important.”*

## **The Honorable Gene Strassburger**

Senior Judge, Superior Court of Pennsylvania  
*Former NLSA Board Member (1972 – 1978)*



*"To the extent that you deprive people of the opportunity to be represented by a lawyer and leave them to their own devices to work their way through legal problems, you are rationing justice. That is the last commodity in the country that you want to ration."*

## **The Honorable Dick Thornburgh**

Former U. S. Attorney General

Former Governor of Pennsylvania

*NLSA Incorporator and Former Board Member (1966 — 1969)*

**In 1966, no one was better qualified than Dick Thornburgh to consider the question of whether to establish a formal program of legal services for the poor in Allegheny County. Nor was anyone more determined.**

Three years earlier, Thornburgh was a young associate with Kirkpatrick & Lockhart (now K&L Gates) when the Supreme Court decided *Gideon v. Wainwright*, establishing the constitutional right to a government-supplied lawyer in criminal cases. With a sense of purpose that is emblematic of his remarkable career, Thornburgh embraced the challenge of fulfilling that guarantee, engaging “in a wide variety of efforts to secure legal counsel for indigent persons.”

He chaired both the Young Lawyers Section (YLS) of the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) and the Public Service Committee of the Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA), which provided pro bono services at the request of judges on a case-by-case basis. As YLS chair, he conducted a statewide survey to determine each county’s capabilities to provide defense counsel to the indigent in criminal cases. His report, published in the PBA journal, “indicated a clear need for legislation, which followed in short order.” Later, as a delegate to Pennsylvania’s Constitutional Convention, Thornburgh co-sponsored a provision that created the constitutional office of Public Defender in each county of the Commonwealth. What most qualified Thornburgh for his seminal role with NLSA, however, is his abiding commitment to the fundamental principles of our justice system.

“I’ve always gone by the words of one of my heroes, Judge Learned Hand, who said: ‘Thou shalt not ration justice.’ In both criminal and civil cases, to the extent that you deprive people of the opportunity to be represented by a lawyer and leave them to their own devices to work their way through legal problems, you are rationing justice. That is the last commodity in the country that you want to ration.”

What made Dick Thornburgh suited for the role of NLSA incorporator also made him a natural choice to help foster its launch. He personally prepared NLSA’s articles of incorporation and went on to serve on its board for the next three years. “It was just the next logical step to get myself in a hands-on position while this organization was starting up to assure that it was meeting the aspirations set forth in its charter and the expectations of the potential client community.”

As with any start-up, NLSA’s first order of business was to deal with what Thornburgh calls “the nuts and bolts.” “We had to hire a director. We had to hire staff. We had to set standards. We had to deal with grievances.” There also were some “little flare-ups here and there” as NLSA’s board worked to incorporate perspectives of directors from the legal profession as well as the client community. All a matter of course for what Thornburgh recalls as “an educational process. It was a good, involved board and, all things considered, it went relatively smoothly.”

Following his 1969 appointment as U. S. Attorney for Western Pennsylvania, Thornburgh resigned from the board to avoid any conflicts

of interest. In a sense, his resignation was a sign of NLSA’s success. “NLSA was in and out of the courts, including federal courts, and it would not have been proper for me to continue to serve. (When I left) they were proceeding to do precisely what they were designed to do, and that was to make sure that people who had legal grievances had proper counsel and the opportunity to have their day in court.”

Decades later Thornburgh characterizes his years with NLSA as a personal watershed, as well as a time of change for the legal profession, both internally and in the public eye. “It made me a believer in the concept behind NLSA, that there is a public responsibility to provide people with counsel in order to meet the challenge that Judge Hand laid down. There were other benefits, as well. People in the community began to understand a little better how the law worked. That took some of the mystique out of it, which in turn made it more accessible. Also, I was proud of the bar for standing up to be counted on this issue, rather than digging in their heels to oppose what some saw as an over extension (of its role).”

Although Thornburgh makes no claim to keeping close tabs on NLSA over the last four decades, he believes that the organization “has long since become an established part of our legal system” with its usefulness acknowledged by the legal profession and the community alike. More broadly, he believes that legal services organizations are now indispensable to society, attesting to the very “credibility of the system.”

“People learn that it is not designed to work against them, but that they can use the system for their own purposes. Normally, they can’t do that with something as complex as the law without having expert advice; and when that expert advice is provided, you level the playing field. No reason why the rich and powerful should be the only ones with lawyers.”

In fact, Thornburgh counts the “rich and powerful” among those with the most to gain from legal services. “One of the enemies of any stable society is when you have an underclass that feels abused by and disconnected from the mainstream. When you provide opportunity for people to use the law for their purposes, you’ve stymied those instincts. There was a lot of unrest in the sixties. It was a very tumultuous era and there was a great threat of instability. I think efforts like NLSA contributed to stabilizing situations that might otherwise have become more volatile.”

Today, Dick Thornburgh’s illustrious career is a matter of public record that continues to unfold. Threaded throughout are the same convictions that drew him to the birth of NLSA – parity for the disenfranchised,

a voice for the voiceless, consequences for corruption that violates the public trust and preys on society’s most vulnerable. Forty-five years and countless achievements later, Thornburgh still ranks his early involvement with NLSA “pretty near the top.”

“The question is, are poor people adequately represented in court? Whether they are criminal defendants or civil defendants or civil plaintiffs — are they getting a fair shake? To the extent that I may have made some contribution to providing that fair shake, that’s an accomplishment of which I’m proud.”



## A 1998 Pittsburgh Post Gazette article dubbed The Honorable R. Stanton Wettick, Jr. “the court’s most diligent judge.”

The story included observations of peers illustrating his legendary productivity and work ethic. “What does he get out of doing so much,” pondered a former colleague. Pride in having a good court, for one thing. And then there is the challenge.

Embracing meaningful challenge is the hallmark of Judge Wettick’s career and a pillar of his personality. In classroom and courtroom, he rigorously tests intellects, legal arguments and, above all, himself. No challenge, however, was more significant for poor and vulnerable residents of our region than his decision in 1969 to take on leadership of Neighborhood Legal Services Association. Established less than three years earlier, the fledgling organization was still struggling to stand on its own.

“I was teaching full time at Pitt (School of Law) and through what would today be called pro bono activities, I was aware that the program wasn’t having much of an impact and appeared to have a culture of avoiding controversy.”

In Judge Wettick’s opinion, the potential for legal services to ensure a fair shake for indigent clients simply was not being realized. He expressed his views to Tom White, Assistant Associate Dean of the Law School, who was then NLSA’s board president. What came next redefines the word “decisive.”

“He asked me ‘Do you want to run it?’ and I said ‘Yeah!’ So I went down to meet with some people at 3 o’clock and at 4 o’clock they offered me the job.”

Many who recall NLSA’s early years credit “Tony” Wettick’s bold leadership with elevating legal services to a place of legitimacy and respect. According to Judge Wettick, it was he that came out ahead.

“If you asked most of us from that period ‘what were the best years in your legal career,’ most would say ‘it was my time at legal services.’ Not only were you on the right side, it was very interesting work. I certainly got a lot more sophisticated in the way I looked at the courts and the law and at what we can and can’t do. It wasn’t a situation where we were being noble. We also were having a lot of fun!”

As incoming Executive Director, Wettick had the wind at his back. Funding was in place and the mandate unfettered. In fact, the late Robert F. Stokes, who succeeded White as board president, gave the new exec free rein to “straighten things out.” “I don’t care what you do, Stokes reportedly said, “just go ahead and do it!”

One of Wettick’s first acts was to replace many existing staff with “incredibly competent recent law graduates who wanted to start their careers in public service” and didn’t flinch at working 80-hour weeks. “My philosophy was that we’d burn them out in about

three years. We also brought in law students that worked about 20 hours a week for about a year and a half. By the time they graduated, they were ready to step in.” Wade in, was more like it.

“It was very exciting at that time because poor people never had access to the law. No one was going to court on their behalf and there were just a bunch of things that were clearly violating due process. A landlord could walk into someone’s house and take their furniture if they allegedly owed rent. The whole concept of public housing was ‘I run it, I decide who gets in, I decide when I kick them out.’ So there were lots of avenues where it was very easy to get things significantly changed.”

Today, it’s a different world. When Judge Wettick left NLSA in 1976, explicit restrictive legislation was in place, with more to come. “The problem is we were too successful. People would say ‘Oh, you’re using all these resources on all these cases.’ Yes, and we were winning, too!”

NLSA brought numerous challenges during Wettick’s tenure resulting in sweeping reforms affecting the poor. Among the most important to Judge Wettick — and to generations of children from low-income families — is the school desegregation case that effectively created the Woodland Hills School District and educational equity throughout those suburban communities. “Through class actions and other litigation we were impacting thousands of people’s lives. Now, legal services is allowed to do very little that impacts persons other than the individual client. Basically, they took away lawyers for poor people.”

Judge Wettick sees the fallout every Friday morning when, more and more frequently, landlord-tenant cases and matters under \$25,000 come before him pro se. Even with a surplus of pro bono attorney volunteers, he argues, federal restrictions would continue to “bar most challenges that would have a meaningful impact on people’s lives.”

With characteristic candor, Judge Wettick deplores the fact that NLSA now must triage access to representation based on which client emergencies are most dire. “It’s just wrong that this program can’t do what it used to be able to do. If we had vibrant legal services today, I think they could find a way to look at mortgages and credit card litigation, for example, on a much broader basis as opposed to one-on-one.”

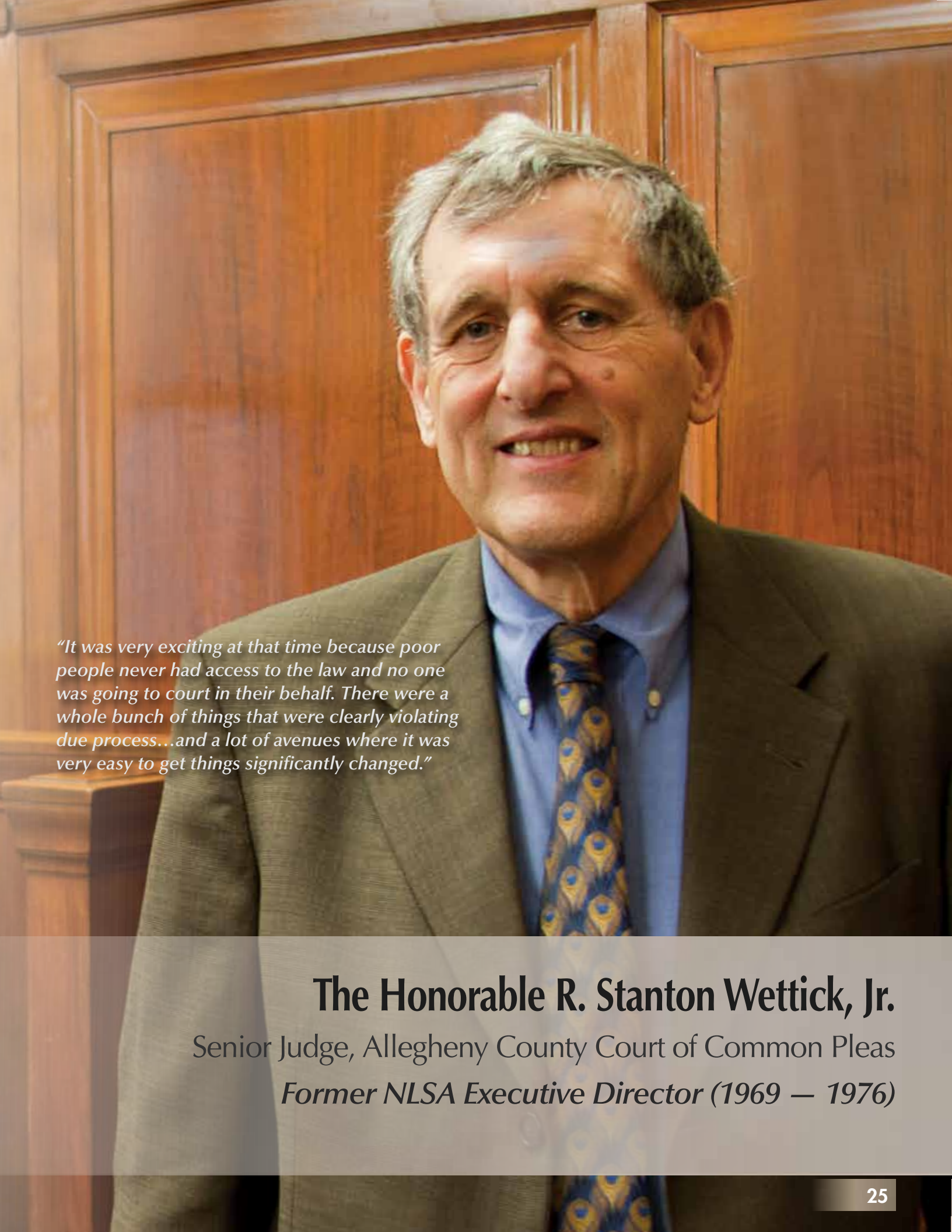
Wettick applauds efforts by law schools and law firms to inspire and model pro bono contributions to help meet demand case by case. As to restoring the scope of legal services, he speculates that those answers, too, will come from within the legal profession.

“If you had ten very bright lawyers willing to work very hard, and thinking about what they can accomplish through the court system, I think they could come up with some things,” said Judge Wettick.

Leading that think tank could be the next challenge he can’t refuse.





A portrait of The Honorable R. Stanton Wettick, Jr., a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue dress shirt, and a patterned tie with blue and gold peacock feathers. The background is a wood-paneled wall.

*“It was very exciting at that time because poor people never had access to the law and no one was going to court in their behalf. There were a whole bunch of things that were clearly violating due process...and a lot of avenues where it was very easy to get things significantly changed.”*

## **The Honorable R. Stanton Wettick, Jr.**

Senior Judge, Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas

*Former NLSA Executive Director (1969 — 1976)*



The Honorable  
**Terrence F. McVerry**  
Judge  
U.S. District Court  
Western District  
of Pennsylvania

**Former NLSA  
Board Member**

*Throughout my legal career I have been impressed with the passion and quality of legal representation that NLSA provides to the most needy of our citizens. I proudly rose to the defense of government funding for community legal services during my tenure as a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, a role that led to my NLSA board membership from 1987-1995. I remain a staunch supporter of that committed and dedicated organization.*



The Honorable  
**Kathleen R. Mulligan**  
Judge  
Allegheny County  
Court of Common Pleas

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

*My thirteen years at NLSA were the best possible preparation for my current position as judge. I learned substantive law, evidence, procedure and hard work. More importantly, I recognized the importance of the principle of equal justice, which I endeavor to provide to every person who enters my courtroom.*



The Honorable  
**Lester G. Nauhaus**  
Judge  
Allegheny County  
Court of Common Pleas

**Former NLSA  
Board Member**

*As a former director of the Allegheny County Public Defender's Office, I saw first hand how essential representation was for indigents accused of crimes. Serving on the NLSA board enabled me to support the efforts of legal services lawyers and pro bono attorney volunteers to ensure the law abiding poor that same access to legal assistance in civil matters. Lawyers can and do make a difference, as NLSA demonstrates each and every day.*



The Honorable  
**Michael A. Nemeo**  
Former Administrative  
Law Judge  
Public Utility Commission

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

*My goal for the legal services clients I represented was to enable them to participate in and understand the applicable legal process for their individual issue or issues. My participation while at NLSA in litigation involving administrative agencies led directly to my career as an administrative law judge for the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. My experience with NLSA clients materially enhanced my ability to relate to the unrepresented individuals who appeared before me in PUC proceedings.*



The Honorable  
**Jane C. Orie**  
State Senator  
Pennsylvania Senate

**NLSA Board Member**

*Serving with NLSA has been an honor and an important educational tool for me. As a legislator I receive information from a wide array of sources, but NLSA is one source I can always have confidence in. Whether it is funding for legal services or how a proposed law may impact its clients, NLSA plays a vital role in advocacy and educating members of the General Assembly, including me.*



The Honorable  
**Rosalia G. Parker**  
Workers' Compensation  
Judge  
Workers' Compensation  
Office of Adjudication

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney  
and Board Member**

*NLSA provided the perfect foundation for my legal career in practice and as an administrative judge. Thirty years later, I still treasure what I learned from both colleagues and clients. Its continued necessary presence in our community is a reminder to avoid complacency about equal access to legal representation.*



The Honorable  
**Alan S. Penkower**  
Former Judge  
Allegheny County  
Court of Common Pleas

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

*I feel fortunate to have served as an NLSA attorney during NLSA's formative years. My experience with the program, the staff and the clientele has had a lasting impact on my life, both professionally and personally.*



The Honorable  
**Leslie E. Perry-Dowdell**  
Chief Administrative Law Judge  
Hearing Office  
Social Security  
Administration

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

*My journey in the fight for justice began with NLSA as a paralegal and continued with NLSA after earning my law degree at the University of Pittsburgh. After 10 years as an NLSA staff attorney handling Social Security cases, among other civil matters, I moved to the Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR). Today, I continue my service as Hearing Office Chief Administrative Law Judge in the Pittsburgh office of ODAR.*



The Honorable  
**Frank J. Pistella**  
Former State Representative  
Pennsylvania House  
of Representatives

**Current NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

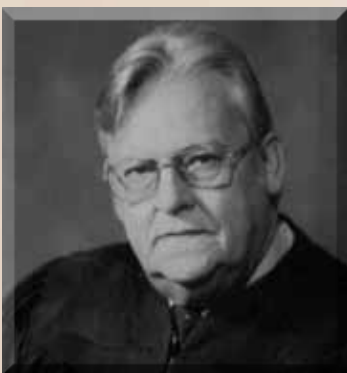
*In the past I have done my best to see to it that NLSA had the resources to give people equal access under the law. Now I work at NLSA making sure, first hand, that our clients have equal access under the law.*



The Honorable  
**Douglas W. Reed**  
Former Magisterial  
District Judge  
Allegheny County

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

*I retain fond and grateful memories of the manner in which NLSA, and particularly Judge Wettick, encouraged me and trusted me as a fledgling in the legal profession. I thank God for the blessings and the luck of a successful career.*



The Late Honorable  
**George H. Ross**  
Former Judge  
Allegheny County  
Court of Common Pleas

**NLSA Incorporator  
and Former Board Member**



The Honorable  
**Jacqueline O. Shogan**  
Judge  
Superior Court  
of Pennsylvania

**Former NLSA  
Board Member**

*It was quite an honor to serve on NLSA's board. I was humbled by the contributions made to Neighborhood Legal Services by so many people — from the attorneys who work there, the attorneys that volunteer their time, the staff and the clients they serve. Today, I see people from this organization before us in court and they do a tremendous job. These are wonderful attorneys. Keep up the good work!*



The Honorable  
**Matthew H. Smith**  
State Representative  
Pennsylvania House  
of Representatives

*Former NLSA  
Board Member*

*During my tenure on the board (2001-2006) prior to taking office, I saw first hand the need for the equal and adequate legal representation NLSA provides for people in need who may be unable to afford legal services. As pro bono coordinator at my law firm, I also worked on behalf of NLSA clients on housing and employment issues. NLSA is instrumental in working to uphold citizen's rights to these basic needs.*



The Honorable  
**Frank I. Smizik**  
State Representative  
Massachusetts House  
of Representatives

*Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney*

*As my first job after law school, NLSA helped to shape my vision for a long and satisfying career in public service. I learned first hand the obstacles facing poor and vulnerable residents and the importance of lawyers to assist them through their struggles. I became focused on public policy and have continued through my career to challenge business and government actions that harm the poor and enact policies through the Massachusetts legislature to protect and lift up those who are most vulnerable.*



The Late Honorable  
**David Stahl**  
Former Judge  
U.S. Court of Appeals  
Third Circuit

*NLSA Incorporator  
and Former Board President*



The Honorable  
**Peter O. Steege**  
Senior Judge  
Beaver County  
Court of Common Pleas

*Former NLSA  
Board Member*

*'Equal access under law' would have had a hollow ring but for the presence of Neighborhood Legal Services Association. The modest extent to which I had a hand in its creation was a proud moment in my career.*



The Late Honorable  
**Robert F. Stokes**  
Former Mayor  
City of Clairton, Pennsylvania

*Former NLSA  
Board President*



The Honorable  
**Gene Strassburger**  
Senior Judge  
Superior Court of Pennsylvania

*Former NLSA  
Board Member*

*In my 33 years on the bench, I have seen the obvious need for legal services for the poor, particularly in the areas of family law and housing law. Untold numbers of poor citizens would have been deprived of their homes, possessions and basic human rights were it not for dedicated NLSA attorneys. I frequently have called upon these attorneys to help the helpless and the response always has been forthcoming. Surely, Allegheny County would be a lesser place without the fine work of NLSA.*



The Honorable  
**Kim Tesla**  
Judge  
Beaver County  
Court of Common Pleas

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

*As a staff attorney with NLSA, I had the privilege to serve with many dedicated attorneys and support staff who worked diligently to assure that fundamental justice would be the same in substance and availability for all people without regard to their economic status.*



The Honorable  
**Frederick W. Thieman**  
Former U.S. Attorney  
Western Pennsylvania

**Former NLSA  
Board Member**

*When I joined NLSA's board, I had my eyes opened to the many equitable disparities that populations in at-risk situations experience in basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, as well as in the ability to seek relief where essential rights are violated. It's not only influenced every career step I've made since then, but it's also inspired me to view things through a better and fairer filter.*



The Honorable  
**Dick Thornburgh**  
Former U.S.  
Attorney General

Former Governor  
of Pennsylvania

**NLSA Incorporator  
and Former Board Member**

*No principle is more fundamental to our democratic society than access to justice under law for all people regardless of economic circumstances. That's why helping Neighborhood Legal Services Association was so important to me. At a time when no formal entity existed to ensure equal access for poor residents of Pennsylvania, thousands of vulnerable people for the first time found a place to turn in a civil legal crisis.*



The Honorable  
**Robert E. Tucker**  
Former Senior Magisterial  
District Judge  
Allegheny County

**Former NLSA  
Board Member**

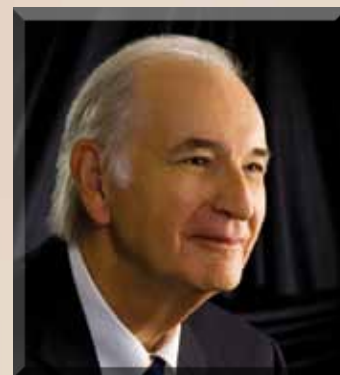
*Although I have been retired to Florida since 2001, my six years on the NLSA Board made me aware of the lack of legal services for a large segment of our society. Therefore, I have contributed financially to programs such as Dues Checkoff, Attorneys Against Hunger, NLSA and the Fellows Society, which support programs for the poor.*



The Honorable  
**R. Stanton Wettick, Jr.**  
Senior Judge  
Allegheny County  
Court of Common Pleas

**Former NLSA  
Executive Director**

*I worked for Neighborhood Legal Services Association because our justice system depends upon access to competent legal counsel. Without legal counsel, a person is not in a position to obtain those benefits and protections that the law intends to provide.*



The Honorable  
**Ronald E. Wilson**  
Chief Judge  
First Judicial Circuit Court  
of West Virginia

**Former NLSA  
Staff Attorney**

*We were a bunch of idealistic lawyers, hell-bent on changing the world; but the people we met forever changed our world. Our leader, Judge Tony Wettick, and a tolerant board of directors let us take on any issue that would help the poor. It was the most satisfying time in my legal career.*



## The Honorable Dick Thornburgh

**Neighborhood Legal Services Association and I entered the public service arena during the same era.** It was a time when access to legal assistance for indigent people in this region was, at best, hit or miss, and when free legal services was seen by some as a form of “socialism” rather than a fundamental guarantee. Thanks to NLSA and all of the men and women in these pages, those unenlightened days are far behind us.

Of course, there is more to do. We, as a society, have an ongoing responsibility to sustain a legal safety net for the poor and vulnerable. And the leadership of that effort falls to the bar.

As in 1966, there are extraordinary individuals able to provide that leadership, many with a deep-seated interest in NLSA and allied activities. Nevertheless, I always welcome the opportunity to encourage fellow attorneys to express responsibility on the public side as part of their successful legal careers. Having been given the privilege of the last word in this distinguished volume, I will use it, in part, to renew that call.

Private attorney volunteers already do a great deal to help NLSA extend its reach; and numerous law firms, ours among them, regularly handle matters on a pro bono basis and secure significant relief for clients. These commitments are simply part of the obligation of being a member of the bar. It is my hope and belief that all of my colleagues share that perspective.

I see the best of intentions by law faculties to impress public service responsibility on their students, many who arrive at law school already filled with a passion for such work. What I do not see is compensation for public service lawyers at the level their skills and proficiency would command in the private sector.

To me, a career in public service appeared the highest calling I could imagine for one simple reason: It offered me the chance to make a positive difference in people’s lives and the quality of life in the world around me. More and more law schools, including my alma mater, the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, are now offering financial awards to graduating students whose goal is to pursue a career in public service. Put simply, the marketplace must also do a better job of encouraging lawyers to make that choice.

Fortunately, dedication offsets economic disparity for the fine attorneys that continue to serve with NLSA. On behalf of your “honorable alumni family,” I thank NLSA for this tribute and I honor, in return, its ceaseless commitment to the promise of justice for all. I am proud to have shared in those beginnings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dick Thornburgh', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Dick Thornburgh

The mission of  
Neighborhood Legal Services Association  
is to meet the civil legal needs  
of the poor and vulnerable in our community  
through effective legal representation and education.

**Neighborhood Legal Services Association**

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Neighborhood Legal Services Association  
A public interest law firm  
Established 1966

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