



## Alabama Law Scholarly Commons

---

H. Thomas Wells, Jr. ABA President  
(2008-2009) Collection Speeches

H. Thomas Wells, Jr. ABA President  
(2008-2009) Collection

---

2008

### 2008-09-10 H. Thomas Wells, Jr. ABA Presidential Speech

H. Thomas Wells Jr.

University of Alabama School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.law.ua.edu/wells\\_aba\\_speeches](https://scholarship.law.ua.edu/wells_aba_speeches)



Part of the Law Commons

---

**Thank you. In my travels as ABA president, I've had many occasions to tell my audiences that "it's a pleasure to be here." But I have to say that it truly is a pleasure to be here to celebrate CLEO's 40th anniversary and to honor our distinguished award recipients.**

**As lawyers, there are times when we are pretty good at making a dollar. But we are at our dead-level best when we are making a difference.**

**CLEO is one of those many examples where we, indeed, make a difference for the better. We're proud of our**

**longstanding support for the council and our regular lobbying on Capitol Hill for funding for the Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity Program. In these days of tight budgets and political wrangling, our steady, authoritative lobbying power is more important than ever.**

**I look back fondly to the very first time I was asked to testify before Congress on the ABA's behalf, back when I was chair of the House of Delegates from 2002-04. I bet you can guess the**

**topic: It was funding for the Marshall Program.**

**Our lobbying is effective, I might add. Last month, President Bush signed into law the Higher Education Act, and with it the reauthorization of the Marshall Program. Aside from renewing this vital resource for aspiring and current law students, the law also expands it by reaching promising students as soon as middle school.**

**Thanks to our efforts, the law also allows federal funds to be used to complement efforts in state-based and**

**state bar programs with a shared mission of greater access to legal education for all.**

**The ABA is proud to have played a part in ensuring that the final legislation reflected CLEO's values and goals.**

**We owe a great deal of thanks to Cassandra, Rod, and the rest of the CLEO staff; to Buddy and the CLEO board; to our CLEO partners; to the volunteers and consultants who lend their expertise to CLEO programs, and to everyone else who makes CLEO shine.**

**CLEO and the Marshall Program are particularly essential at this time, because**

**minority enrollment in law school is in decline, and the cost of law school has placed the opportunity out of reach for so many.**

**This is important, because it undermines public confidence in the justice system. We need to promote a legal profession that reflects the diversity of the public we serve.**

**CLEO is a big part in helping us do this. I thank you all for being here and allowing me to say a few words.**