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Audience: Most of the meeting participants are Chairs or members of state Access to Justice Commissions or similar entities, or are bar leaders or judges involved in Access to Justice initiatives. Roughly half of the audience will have heard your luncheon speech at the Equal Justice Conference, so you can build on it but will not want to repeat it.

Welcome to the 8th Annual National Meeting of Access to Justice Chairs. As president of the ABA, I'm glad to be here to lend my support and to learn about what you're doing.

This is a gathering of state leaders with the greatest potential to improve the justice system in each state.

Access to Justice leaders have come together annually for past 7 years to exchange information and experience.

I am honored to join you in these important discussions this year.

The growth of the state-based Access to Justice movement has been one of the most significant developments for the legal profession in the past decade.

Since 2001, when the first meeting of state Access to Justice Chairs was held, the number of state Access to Justice Commissions has grown from five to 24.

In a number of other states, there are strong partnerships among the bar, the courts, legal aid providers, law schools, and other stakeholders, that are the hallmark of the Access to Justice movement.

The ABA is proud to have played a role in supporting this movement by convening this meeting for the past seven years and in 2007, creating the ABA Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives, which provides support for your efforts.

The ABA knows how important your efforts are. I personally know what a difference the Alabama ATJ Commission is making in my home state.

I have seen the hard work that my law firm partner Ted Hosp, the Chair of the Alabama ATJ Commission, has done. Ted works with the Commission's Vice Chair, Judge Tommie Jones, and Law Foundation Executive Director Tracy Daniel, and I know that you all are making the same kind of effort in your state. The ABA recognizes the critical importance of the work you are doing.

I also want to recognize the critical efforts of Alabama's Chief Justice, Sue Bell Cobb, to make Access to Justice one of her top priorities. When she speaks at Bar and judicial events, it is always on her agenda.

Alabama's efforts are paying off. This past year, we ceased to be one of the few states without any state funding for civil legal aid. In fact, while this time a year ago there were five states with no state funding for legal aid, that number has come down to two – congratulations to

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**Alaska, South Dakota and my friends in
Alabama.**

**In addition to securing a legislative
appropriation for legal services, the
Commission was successful in raising
Alabama's pro haec vice fee from \$100 to
\$300, with the difference going to support
civil legal services.**

**And finally, the Commission has
recently released a legal needs study that
demonstrates the depth of the unmet need
for legal services in the state.**

**As you know, at the national level, the
ABA continues to lead access to justice**

efforts by seeking increased federal funding to support LSC.

This lobbying event is known as ABA Day. It brings lawyers to Washington DC on various issues of importance to the profession.

During ABA Day 2009 - April 21-22 – this year’s event was targeted solely on access to justice issues (including increased funding for LSC), a matter of critical importance in light of the decreased IOLTA and other funding and the increased needs due to the economic crisis.

Many of you were there this year, and I encourage those of you who were not to put it on your schedule for next year. But don't feel that you have to wait for ABA Day – I urge you to visit your U.S. representatives in their district offices and talk to them about the importance of federal funding for legal services.

On behalf of the ABA, I want to thank you for coming today and for all you are doing in your home states to make the promise of equal justice for all Americans a reality.