December 12, 2007

Nevada Supreme Court Justice Mark Gibbons Justice Michael L. Douglas Justice James W. Hardesty Justice Ron Parraguirre Justice Michael A. Cherry Justice Nancy M. Saitta



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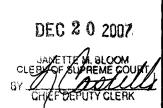
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ADKT 411

Chief Justice A. William Maupin



FILED

RE: Report of the Indigent Defense Commission

Honorable Justices:

Washoe Legal Services is committed to assuring the fair administration of justice for low income clients, and promoting the ability of everyone, regardless of their financial condition, to have meaningful access to the courts. Although we operate in the civil arena, we recognize that this goal is equally, if not more, important in criminal cases. Therefore, we urge the Court to adopt the findings and recommendations of the majority report of the Indigent Defense Commission.

Through our program for assisting County Jail inmates in noncriminal legal matters we have come to appreciate the need for adequate appointed representation. Without caseload limits and specific standards this is difficult to achieve or verify.

We have found the Public Defender attorneys to be dedicated. caring professionals who are intent upon doing the best job possible with the inadequate resources at their disposal. However, with current caseloads it seems impossible to provide quality representation to each and every client.

An adequate Public Defender system is necessary to avoid injustice to the indigent. We will all benefit by keeping families together when appropriate, and minimizing the disruption of financial support caused by incarceration. This, in turn, helps to avoid homelessness and the loss of other essential services.

Adequate representation may also benefit some of our domestic violence clients even though a Public Defender will be appointed to

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represent the abuser. Although we have no empirical evidence, intuitively it makes sense that adequate Public Defender representation may assist an abusive individual to obtain help when available to address the cause of the abusiveness, resulting in fewer repeat incidents.

Finally, adequate appointed representation helps to maintain public confidence in, and respect for, the legal system. Such confidence is essential to advance the rule of law and allow the government to carry out its Constitutional mandate to promote the general welfare.

Sincerely,

WASHOE LEGAL SERVICES

Paul Elcano Executive Director

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Marc Ashley Staff Attorney, Inmate Assistance Project

cc: Jeremy T. Bosler Washoe County Public Defender