

# NEWS



MASSACHUSETTS  
BAR ASSOCIATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

May 24, 2007

**CONTACT:**

Tricia M. Oliver  
(617) 338-0677

## **MBA HOUSE OF DELEGATES UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTS PRINCIPLE OF CIVIL *GIDEON***

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — The Massachusetts Bar Association House of Delegates (HOD) voted unanimously yesterday to support a civil *Gideon* resolution, urging the state to provide legal counsel to low income people in civil matters involving basic human needs.

The discussion surrounding civil *Gideon* highlighted the May 23 meeting, held in Springfield at the MassMutual Center, at which MBA President Mark Mason symbolically passed the gavel to President-elect David W. White Jr., whose term officially begins Sept. 1, 2007.

Michael S. Greco, past president of both the American Bar Association and the Massachusetts Bar Association, called on the MBA to endorse ABA Resolution 112A. The resolution calls for the government to provide free legal counsel to the indigent in a limited number of civil cases involving basic human needs such as shelter, sustenance, safety, health and child custody.

“It is shameful that in the most bountiful country in the world, that 80 percent of the legal needs of the poorest Americans go unmet year after year,” Greco told the group, advocating that the right to counsel should not be limited to criminal cases.

“Imprisonment is not just being behind bars,” said Greco. “It can be living in poverty day after day. This issue is the defining issue for the legal profession, for the organized bar, for society.”

The resolution does not address how the initiative should be funded or implemented. Mason said it’s an important first step in providing equal justice in civil cases. “This was truly history in the making,” said Mason. “We have much to be proud of.”

*Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.*