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March 5, 2013

The Honorable Eric Holder, Jr.
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Constitution Avenue & 10th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I am pleased to offer this letter to help commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, which held the right to the assistance of counsel is a fundamental right and essential for a fair trial. In so holding, the Court correctly recognized the centrality of the adversarial system to due process.

Confidence in our system of justice will be weakened if we cannot ensure that the government's evidence will be put to the test by able advocates. Indeed, when Clarence Earl Gideon was retried for his alleged crimes, the testimony of a key witness against him was meticulously dissected, and discredited, by his appointed lawyer, leading to Gideon's acquittal.

The House Judiciary Committee is committed to enacting criminal laws that punish criminal activities while protecting the Constitutional rights of U.S. citizens. When our laws maintain this balance, they will function most efficiently and will be respected by our citizens.

Sincerely,



Bob Goodlatte
Chairman