

April 19, 2004

The Honorable Jim Kolbe
Chairman
Subcommittee on Foreign Operations
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Kolbe:

In my capacity as President of the American Bar Association, I have the opportunity to visit the ABA's overseas programs aimed at fostering democracy and respect for the rule of law. I recently visited the Russian Federation at the invitation of the ABA's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (CEELI); I came away from that experience more persuaded than ever that the promotion of the rule of law must be a critical element of U.S. foreign policy and overseas assistance efforts. It will certainly remain an ABA priority in the coming decades.

The CEELI program is a special project of the ABA through which some of America's best and brightest legal professionals assist former eastern block countries (e.g., Uzbekistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Serbia, Kosovo, Kazakhstan) in making the transition to democratic nations governed by the rule of law. They do so on a *pro bono* basis, typically for one year and often longer. Committed judges, lawyers, court administrators and prosecutors have been disrupting their comfortable lives in the U.S. to serve overseas through the CEELI program since 1990.

While in Moscow, I had the opportunity to meet with several CEELI volunteers, members of the Department of Justice (OPDAT), USAID, the State Department and U.S. Ambassador Vershbow. I also had the privilege of meeting many of our Russian counterparts, including legislators, judges and young lawyers with whom I had the chance to speak about their reform efforts. Although Russia has made important progress in advancing the rule of law, including the recent expansion of jury trials throughout Russia for serious criminal cases, there is much important work to be done, including, to name just one example, the passage of comprehensive legislation that protects its citizens from the horrors of human trafficking and brings traffickers to justice.

In recent years, the ABA has built on its experience with CEELI in the Europe and Eurasia region to develop similar programs in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and in several countries of the Middle East as well, including Iraq. ABA's Asia Law Initiative (ABA-Asia) currently has programs in China, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, as well as a regional anti-corruption program for Asia and the Pacific. Later this month, I will visit the

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ABA's rule of law program in Cambodia. ABA-Asia is implementing two inter-related activities in Cambodia: (i) spurring public interest advocacy by building the capacity of a local NGO to become a high impact litigation foundation; and (ii) developing a robust clinical legal education program to be required for all law graduates and offered through the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia Lawyer Training Center. In June, I will join the ABA's Africa Initiative as a featured speaker at Nigeria's Democracy Day festivities.

Funding for these programs comes in large measure from the Department of Justice, USAID and the State Department. I cannot overstate the value of these programs. Day-in day-out, they are making a difference in the quality of the laws adopted, the effectiveness of the courts, and the professionalism of lawyers and law enforcement bodies in dozens of developing countries. We are gratified to see the rule of law begin to take hold in a number of the countries where we work.

The ABA remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting the rule of law, with its profound implications not only for the economic and political development of other countries, but also, in this interconnected world, for our economic prosperity and physical security at home. We recognize that we could not pursue these goals without the generosity of important funders and supporters of our mission.

I want to thank you personally and in my capacity as President of the ABA for your support for rule of law programs generally, and for the ABA specifically. I hope that we can look to you to continue supporting and funding the efforts of these members of the American legal profession who, as volunteers, are a force multiplier for every taxpayer dollar spent on these important overseas projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dennis W. Archer".

Dennis W. Archer
President

cc: The Honorable Colin Powell
The Honorable John Ashcroft
Mr. Andrew S. Natsios