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# PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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## **WISCONSIN STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER NICHOLAS CHIARKAS TO GIVE OPENING ADDRESS AT NLADA'S 2002 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

WASHINGTON, DC, October 29, 2002 — The National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) is pleased to announce that Wisconsin State Public Defender Nicholas Chiarkas, will provide the opening address for its 2002 Annual Conference — themed *Justice in Action* — November 13, at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center in Wisconsin.

NLADA's Annual Conference is a premiere event within the equal justice community, drawing hundreds of attendees from across the country. Public interest lawyers, civil legal aid attorneys, public defenders, social workers and others convene annually to learn the latest trends, to update skills and techniques and to network with colleagues — resulting in notable speakers and trainers participating to share their insight and knowledge with attendees.

"NLADA is pleased that Mr. Chiarkas, a former New York City Police Officer, will open this year's annual conference," said NLADA President and CEO Clint Lyons. "He is a proven leader on the local, state, national and international levels, and he inspires people to action. We are honored to have him address our national meeting."

Chiarkas was appointed the director of Wisconsin's State Public Defender Agency in 1988. He also served as cabinet member and senior advisor to Wisconsin Governor Tommy G. Thompson. In addition, Chiarkas is the founder of *Justice Without Borders*, an international initiative seeking to make a difference in the world by creating, strengthening, and/or advancing indigent defense systems. In addition, he was an adjunct professor of law at the University of Wisconsin Law School and a former visiting lecturer in law at Justus-Liebig-Universität, Gießen, Germany. Prior to his appointment, he

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served as counsel to several federal agencies including the President's Commission on Organized Crime and the United States Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

In 1996, Chiarkas became the nation's first public defender to receive the "Law Enforcement Commendation Medal" awarded by The Sons of the American Revolution. In 1999 and again in 2000, Governor Thompson recommended to the National Governor's Association that Chiarkas be named the National Public Executive of the Year. In 2000, the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration named Chiarkas Administrator of the Year. In 2001, he was elected to the Alumni Executive Council of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and to the board of directors for Wisconsin Forward Award. In 2002, he received the Outstanding Professional Award by the Wisconsin Law Foundation, and was chosen Vietnam Veteran of the Year by the Vietnam Veterans of America, Wisconsin State Council.

In addition to leading the Wisconsin State Public Defender Agency, Chiarkas is working with Israel to enrich its first National Public Defender Agency, and also with Japan as it considers introducing a public defender system. He is also working with the U.S. Department of Justice in examining indigent defense in the United States.

Chiarkas holds doctorate and master's degrees in Philosophy and Sociology from Columbia University; a law degree from Temple University; a master's and bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from the City University of New York; a post graduate certificate in Computer Systems Analysis from New York University. He is a former Pickett Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He has also published several books and articles.

For more information on the NLADA 2002 Annual Conference, visit [www.nlada.org](http://www.nlada.org).

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The National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) champions effective legal assistance for people who cannot afford counsel, serves as a collective voice for both civil legal services and public defense services throughout the nation and provides a wide range of services and benefits to its individual and organizational

members. Founded in 1911, NLADA is the oldest and largest national, nonprofit membership organization devoting all of its resources to advocating equal access to justice for all Americans.