

EXPECT OUR BANANA REPUBLIC-LIKE ACCESS TO JUSTICE TO GET WORSE

Not long ago, an independent group showed that the access to justice for the average American rivaled that of a banana republic. And no one is making much of an effort to fix that problem. As DDay reported last week, while the Dodd-Frank bill authorized \$35 million to support legal services, no one has appropriated it (and the folks about to take over the House aren't likely to do so anytime soon).


Unfortunately, the one guy in the Obama Administration tasked to do something about that problem, Lawrence Tribe, is about to leave.

After nine months as the Justice Department's "senior counselor for access to justice," Laurence H. Tribe, a prominent Harvard law professor and mentor to President Obama, will leave his position and return to Massachusetts early next month.

[snip]

During Mr. Tribe's brief tenure, he traveled around the country meeting with judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and legal aid workers, in an effort to find places where access to the justice system could be improved for ordinary people. He said he was pleased with the ways his office had found "to create a much more energized network, even though the problems are pervasive and cannot be transformed overnight."

In partnership with other agencies, Mr. Tribe's office pushed programs to increase training and collect more data about indigent defense, use the Internet



to expand legal services to poor people in rural areas, strengthen legal services for victims of domestic violence, and expand mediation as an alternative to lawsuits for people involved in foreclosures.

Mind you, Tribe is not leaving because he's disgruntled with the Administration. Rather, he's returning to get medical care for a problem that has recurred.

Still, at a time when one of the only forces keeping the bankers from running roughshod over the private property of a bunch of real people is a bunch of legal services lawyers, the loss of Tribe comes at a terrible time.