Thank you President Toole for those generous words.

I’ve been given 15 minutes for this acceptance speech, but have decided why bore you with a long speech, when I can bore you just as well with a short one?

Franklin D. Roosevelt set forth the best rules of public speaking, “Be sincere, be brief, be seated.” I will do my best to operate within these rules.

As Steve noted, this is a very special anniversary year for the King County Bar.

In 1886, a group of Seattle lawyers decided to form a bar association in response to attorney involvement in a mob effort to get Chinese workers out of Seattle.

125 years ago this very month, on February 7, 1886, a group of anti-Chinese Seattletes entered our Chinatown district, claiming to be health inspectors.

They systematically went through the community “finding” Chinese-occupied buildings to be unsafe. Chinese-Americans were forced out these buildings and down to the harbor, where a ship was waiting.

The “inspectors” then collected several hundred dollars from each so-called passenger to pay for their departure.

Other Chinese were being forced to the railroad to be similarly run out of the city.

Seattle’s then mayor Henry Yesler, Sheriff (and future governor) John McGraw, famed local Judge Thomas Burke, and then U.S. district attorney (and later state Supreme Court Justice) William Henry White realized what was happening and served the ship’s captain with a writ of habeas corpus.

They also warned the railroad superintendent that he would be charged with kidnapping if he aided the mob.

Sadly, many attorneys were organizers of this anti-Chinese action.

Leaders like Judge Burke saw the need for a local bar that, rather than be a social club, could discipline the attorneys who participated in the anti-Chinese action, as well as provide more just legal leadership in King County.

With that came the creation in 1886 of the King County Bar Association.
The very first resolution adopted by the bar in 1886 chastised those anti-Chinese attorneys as “pestilential agitators” who are “abandoning every useful calling” and “arraying one class against another” and by doing so are “the worst enemies of society.”

Over the past 125 years, the original motivation to uphold the rule of law in the pursuit of justice has not waned. It is a true honor in our anniversary year for the KCBA to receive the Legal Foundation of Washington's prestigious Goldmark Award in recognition of our efforts to promote equal justice.

Of course, this award is really recognition of the consistent work over a long period of years by so many who came before us, including the 105 attorneys who preceded me as KCBA president. They and past trustees were successful stewards of a vision that the KCBA would be more than a professional society and more than a social club. We would harness our voice to be a champion of access to justice, usually as the owner of many “firsts.”

The first bar association in the state,

the first organization of any kind, private or public, to offer legal aid services to our community, and

a leader in challenging lawyers, judges and all levels of state and local government to provide for adequate redress, including to the most economically disadvantaged members of our community.

KCBA established the first Washington State Legal Aid Bureau in 1939 with paid staff attorneys, with the Bureau's budget underwritten by KCBA members for almost twenty years until we incorporated it into a separate entity in 1958.

But our involvement in civil legal aid didn't end there.

In the early 1960s we identified more pro bono attorneys to represent the indigent and conscientious objectors to the war in Vietnam. As that work grew, we opened special Legal Service Centers in Seattle, with a special focus on racial discrimination. Then in 1968 KCBA sponsored a pilot program to consider the need for a public defender office in our community; a year later the city of Seattle joined with the bar to create the Public Defender Corporation of Seattle.

In the 1970s we created our first neighborhood legal clinics, designed to give 30 minute consultations on a wide range of legal issues. From a single clinic on Capitol Hill in the 70s, to 37 clinics today, over 600 KCBA volunteers assist thousands of our neighbors each year.

As a former volunteer in the clinics, I can personally attest to the satisfaction that comes with taking an evening to help the people who come in to navigate through tricky and major issues in their lives, especially when they often have no where else to turn.
In addition to the clinics, our Community Services team includes the bar's Volunteer Legal Services program, which offers eligible clients direct representation with Chapter 7 bankruptcy, vacating criminal records, social security overpayments, estate planning, and debt defense. Our Family Law programs include programs that assist clients with contested dissolutions, parentage cases and petitions to establish parenting plans where children are at risk, noncontested dissolutions and petitions to establish a parenting plan, and nonparental custody cases.

The King County Bar's Housing Justice Project provides free legal help to eligible low-income tenants in King County facing imminent eviction. Our volunteer attorneys see thousands of clients each year at the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle and at the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent. Those numbers have been growing dramatically due to the recession.

The bar has been very fortunate to have received significant financial support in our housing work through the Building Resilience Fund, a special emergency funding opportunity organized by our keynote speaker Norm Rice and the Seattle Foundation. I want to take this moment to personally thank Norm and his colleagues at the Seattle Foundation for their generous and hopefully continued financial support of the important social safety net programs of the King County Bar.

We created this array of special pro bono programs designed to complement the outstanding work done by our partners at Northwest Justice Project, Columbia Legal Services, and the Northwest Immigrants Rights Project, to name just a few of our companion organizations. Our pro bono team also works very closely with our companion voluntary lawyer programs across the state.

We are charter members of the statewide Alliance for Equal Justice, and are committed to the hard work done by the Access to Justice board in developing a comprehensive statewide plan for civil legal aid delivery. We also strongly commit the King County Bar toward advocacy to secure --and in the current budgetary woes of our state and federal government-- to defend full funding of our civil legal aid safety net.

And the King County Bar has strong arguments for legislative appropriators in Olympia when it comes to how we leverage the government's financial support of civil legal aid.

The KCBA and our sister organization the King County Bar Foundation annually invest over $1 Million, approximately one-third of the KCBA overall budget, into our pro bono programs.

As a side note, you may not realize how unique the King County Bar's underwriting of pro bono is.

I am not aware of many, if any, other bar associations that put one-third of their entire resources into similar efforts.
And, of course, we still have to provide the traditional membership services that voluntary bar members should fully expect and receive from the KCBA.

Along with that $1 million financial commitment to pro bono support, we leverage about 1,500 volunteer attorneys each year.

We simply could not deliver this volume of legal services without those volunteers! They provide about 34,000 hours to over 10,000 customers per year.

At an assumed hourly billing rate of $250 per hour, that amounts to a contribution of roughly $8.5 Million per year in services. The government's "share" of that cost for KCBA? About $300,000 a year. That's quite a good return on the government's investment!

Where does the money come from to support our volunteer attorneys?

In addition to government support, the bar receives an annual grant from the Legal Foundation of Washington, for which we are most grateful.

We also raise hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in voluntary donations from individual attorneys and law firms.

As you heard earlier, the Campaign for Equal Justice just completed a record-breaking year in 2010, in particular due to the joint efforts across the state of our pro bono program boards.

I salute all the counties for their excellent work, including our King County Bar Foundation trustees and their LAW Fund partners who raised almost a half million dollars in King County.

Another key source of financial support comes from our annual Breakfast with Champions fundraiser, which is coming up on March 24 with keynote speaker Jeffrey Toobin from CNN. I hope you'll join that intimate gathering of over 1,000 lawyers, judges, law professors, and political leaders!

Pro bono services has been, is, and will continue to be the jewel in the crown for KCBA.

I've spent most of my time this afternoon talking about the bar's commitment to pro bono.

I want to observe my speaking rules and stop speaking before you stop listening, but before I get the hook and am pulled away from this podium, I would be remiss if I didn't say a few words about our commitment to social justice and diversity, since they all combine to make KCBA the amazing organization it is.

While we've hit a few speed bumps over the bar's 125 year long commitment to social justice -- I'm told the Seattle bar voted to turn in to the Department of Justice certain enemy aliens and labor "agitators" back in 1919 during the first world war -- for the most part we can all be proud of the King County Bar's leadership on social justice and diversity.
KCBA spoke out on behalf of the accused during the McCarthy Era.

We were representing conscientious objectors during the Vietnam War.

The 1960s saw us focusing our pro bono services to assist in matters of racial discrimination.

In 1969 we established our minority law student scholarship program under former KCBA president Bill Gates' leadership. These efforts weren't always easy to get started -- Bill remembers an all member meeting called by some attorneys seeking his resignation as bar president for proposing the scholarship fund.

But some forty years later the King County Bar has awarded over $1.6 million to over 600 minority law students -- some of whom are among our most prominent attorneys and jurists like Court of Appeals Judge Ron Cox.

We encourage economically disadvantaged high school students, many of whom are persons of color, to pursue careers in law through our Future of the Law Institute.

Just last week, I met with a group from Chief Sealth high school visiting Starbucks as part of that program. I was impressed with their questions and interest in the law and what FLI does for them.

We run a fabulous annual event, the Martin Luther King luncheon, which this year hosted 675 guests, Julian Bond as our speaker. Rumor has it that the 2012 lunch will feature another legend in the civil rights movement, Andrew Young.

This commitment to diversity programming is coupled with a commitment to even more social justice initiatives.

The King County Bar's leadership on drug policy reform, once considered cutting edge and controversial, is now the mainstream opinion in our state.

No less than the Seattle Times came out in favor of legalization this month.

I personally addressed a state legislative committee a few weeks ago on the merits of a bill introduced by Representative Dickerson that would establish a taxed and regulated system for the distribution of marijuana.

This is a system that the KCBA had suggested in a detailed report and recommendation adopted by our board as policy in 2005.

We continue our work to ensure that drug policy focuses on education, prevention and treatment, rather than as a war that disparately impacts ethnic and economically disadvantaged communities.
We continue to be a strong voice of support for our local courts, as was evidenced by our leadership in supporting last fall's ballot measure, Proposition 1.

This recognition that this award gives to the King County Bar is one of the biggest honors we've ever received. We have several tables full of people with us today whose hard work and dedication make KCBA's efforts possible. I'm especially grateful for the talented and committed KCBA staff who support our volunteers' work. From staff attorneys who train and mentor volunteers, to paralegals and accountants, from membership staff to operations staff, we have an amazing team to work with.

In conclusion, today's award is a tremendous honor for the King County Bar as we begin this Quasquicentennial Year of Celebration.

I thank all those who wrote letters in support of our nomination for the award, and I express the bar's sincere gratitude to the Legal Foundation of Washington for this prestigious honor.

Thank you very much.