

Sen. Clinton praises Legal Aid Society's role in serving justice

ANGELA D. CHATMAN
Plain Dealer Reporter

At a time when people are backing away from obligations to others, Legal Aid societies help maintain the concept of justice for all, U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton told a Cleveland audience.

Clinton, the junior senator

from New York, was the keynote speaker at the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's 100th anniversary gala Saturday night at the Cleveland Convention Center. About 950 people attended the event, the organization's first major fund-raiser. The organization wants to raise \$250,000 to expand its services.

"We have built a justice system

that is the envy of the world. But we must be vigilant that it serves all citizens," Clinton told the audience.

Clinton said that providing justice for all was crucial to maintaining American society.

"Every time a client of the Legal Aid Society is helped, I think it helps us," she said.

She praised C. Lyonel Jones,

the director of the local society, who will retire at the end of the year.

She said at the time Legal Aid societies were created, people were committed to helping others and "that created a sense of community and commitment that really elevated the law throughout society."

Clinton established the Legal Aid Society at the University of Arkansas and she also was a board member and one-time board president of the Legal Services Corp., a private non-profit corporation created by Congress to provide money for Legal Aid societies.

The former first lady's presence at the \$250-a-plate dinner-dance capped a day in Greater Cleveland that began with a town hall meeting to generate support for the proposed Count Every

Vote Act that she and U.S. Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones have introduced in Congress.

Hundreds of people — elected officials, students and citizens — packed the gymnasium and auditorium at Warrensville Heights High School Saturday afternoon to hear Clinton and Jones call for ways to ensure integrity in the electoral process.

"We need to do everything we can to encourage Americans eligible to vote to vote," Clinton told the audience. "But then we also have to make clear that when you go to vote, your vote will count."

Michael Vu, director of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, stressed efforts to ensure better elections in the future, including the use of more voting machines.

The crowd booed Secretary of

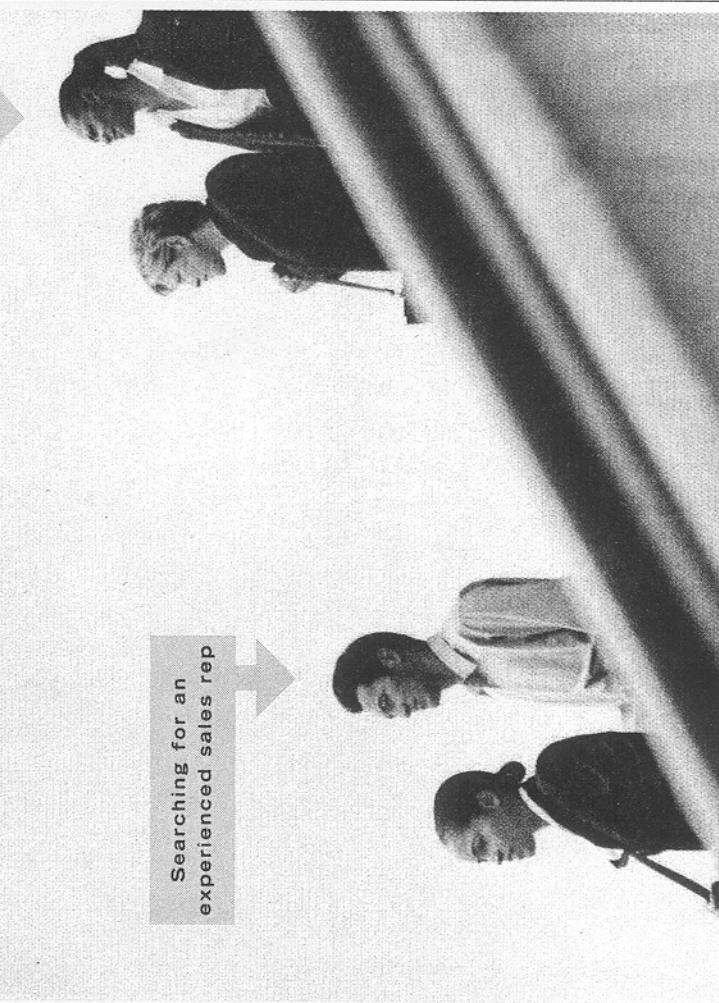
State Kenneth Blackwell when State Sen. Teresa Fedor of Toledo mentioned his name, implying that his policies caused the inconvenience and disenfranchisement of voters in the last presidential election.

"The reality is our election system needs reform and it needs reform now," Fedor said.

Others talked about the large turnout of young voters, problems at the polls and the need to hold accountable those people who infringe on others' right to vote.

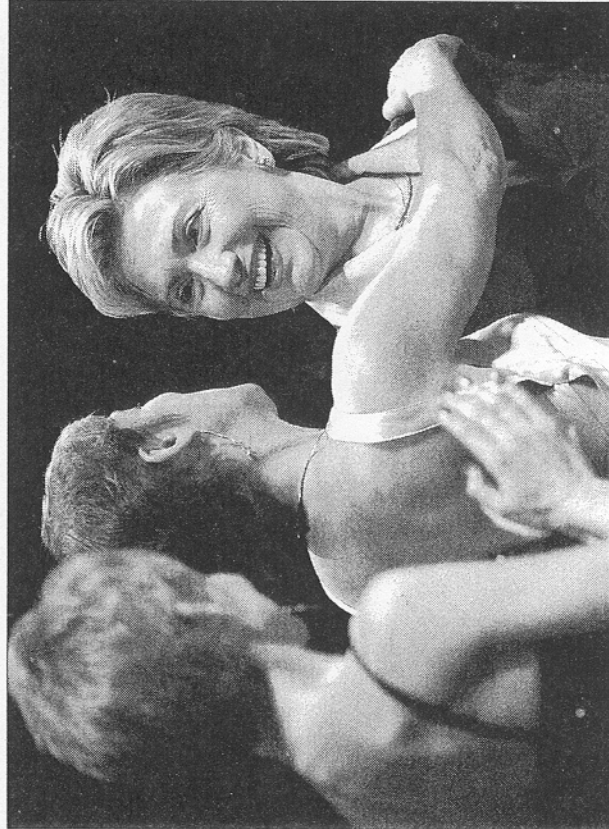
"We cannot be exporting democracy to places like Iraq and Afghanistan and not have democracy here at home," Clinton said.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: achatman@plaind.com, 216-999-4115



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U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, is greeted by Patricia Poole, far left, and Diane Citrino, co-chairwomen of Saturday's 100th anniversary gala for the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.