He was elected to Congress in November 1986 and has served as U.S. Representative of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District since then. That district includes the entire city of Atlanta, Georgia and parts of Fulton, DeKalb and Clayton counties.

Often called “one of the most courageous persons the Civil Rights Movement ever produced,” John Lewis has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and building what he calls “The Beloved Community” in America.

His dedication to the highest ethical standards and moral principles has won him the admiration of many of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the United States Congress.

The Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi has called Lewis “the conscience of the U.S. Congress.” And Roll Call magazine has said, “John Lewis...is a genuine American hero and moral leader who commands widespread respect in the chamber.”

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is hosting Congressman Lewis on October 18, 2011. Congressman Lewis will provide the keynote remarks at Legal Aid’s 2011 Annual Report to the Community – a dinner event at the Renaissance Hotel.

“It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness” is the theme of Legal Aid’s event this year.

Legal Aid is the law firm for low-income individuals and provides services in the areas of consumer rights, disability, domestic violence, education, employment, family law, health, housing, foreclosure, immigration, public benefits, utilities, and tax.

Legal Aid was the fifth legal aid in the world when founded in 1905. Today, Legal Aid remains a nonprofit that employs 53 attorneys, 40 staff and engages more than 1800 volunteer lawyers, funded by the Legal Services Corporation, the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation and numerous other foundations, law firms and individual donors.

Legal Aid’s clients are low income people who are confronted with a legal problem that -- if left unresolved -- will result in loss of housing, education, income, food, safety or family stability. The problems they face are life problems that have a legal resolution.

These clients have legal rights but without an attorney those rights will not be enforced.

Congressman Lewis embodies Legal Aid's mission of access to justice for all. As a young boy, he was inspired by the activism surrounding the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the words of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., which he heard on radio broadcasts. In those pivotal moments, he made a decision to become a part of the Civil Rights Movement. Ever since then, he has remained at the vanguard of progressive social movements and the human rights struggle in the United States.

As a student at American Baptist College, John Lewis organized sit-in demonstrations at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1961, he volunteered to participate in the Freedom Rides, which challenged segregation at interstate bus terminals across the South. Lewis risked his life on those rides many times by simply sitting in seats reserved for white patrons. He was also beaten severely by angry mobs and arrested by police for challenging the injustice of Jim Crow segregation in the South.

During the height of the Movement, from 1963 to 1966, Lewis was named chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which he helped form. SNCC was largely responsible for organizing student activism in the movement, including sit-ins and other activities.

While still a young man, Lewis became a nationally recognized leader. By 1963, he was dubbed one of the Big Six leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. (The others were Whitney Young, A. Phillip Randolph, Martin Luther King Jr., James Farmer and Roy Wilkins). At the age of 23, he was an architect of and a keynote speaker at the historic March on Washington in August 1963.

He was elected to Congress in November 1986 and has served as U.S. Representative of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District since then. That district includes the entire city of Atlanta, Georgia and parts of Fulton, DeKalb and Clayton counties. He is Senior Chief Deputy Whip for the Democratic Party in leadership in the House, a member of the House Ways & Means

Committee, a member of its Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, and Chairman of its Subcommittee on Oversight.

John Lewis holds a B.A. in Religion and Philosophy from Fisk University, and he is a graduate of the American Baptist Theological Seminary, both in
Nashville, Tennessee
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A limited number of tickets are available for the Legal Aid event on October 18. Reservations will be accepted through October 13. For more details visit Legal Aid's website: www.lasclev.org or call Melanie Shakarian, Esq. at (216) 861-5217.