When we work with open law publishers around the world, we remember: there are places where lawyers are heroes. Nelson Mandela is a lawyer; so was most of the leadership in the fight against apartheid. All around the world, lawyers lead the fight for basic human rights and social justice.

Knowing what the law says is a formidable source of power and identity. The motto of SwaziLII — the Legal Information Institute of Swaziland — is “kwetfu,” a Swazi word that means “it is ours.” SwaziLII is one of more than 25 organizations around the world that have adopted our name as part of their own. They are one of the national organizations participating in AfricanLII, an umbrella organization for free law publishers in Africa. We are proud to serve as their advisors.

Founded at Cornell Law School in 1992, the LII has become a global force in open access to legal information. We provide American legal information to American citizens, but also to millions more around the world, just as our work informs and inspires our namesake operations to do the same. Last year we provided American legal information to people in 225 countries and territories, ranging in number of visits from Mayotte (a politically-independent territory in the Comoros Islands) to Canada, America’s nearest neighbor and trading partner. Use of our statutory and regulatory materials outside the US broadly parallels trade volume, making the LII an indispensable source for business growth in a global economy.

LII staff regularly serve as advisors to organizations wanting to open up the law in their own countries. Since our first efforts in Zambia in 1996, we have served as consultants to efforts for all 10 members of AfricanLII, and for similar efforts in Japan, Vietnam, Sweden, Australia, the UK, and Mongolia. There, as here in the United States, we see open access to law as an important ingredient in advancing individual rights, creating the rule of law, and fostering economic development.

Legal information does more than help people involved in legal proceedings. It is a powerful tool that

- advertises economic opportunity, and helps people to assess and manage risk. Those interested in direct foreign investment in another country want to know what the rules are.
- helps businesspeople at all levels plan for business uncertainty. Tax laws and regul-
lations that affect products and services are like a weather report for the business climate. Making that information widely available in a way that reduces the cost of discovering and using it has a beneficial effect on business at all levels.

- **offsets corruption**, which often grows in the gaps between what citizens and officials enjoy in their access to and understanding of legal information.
- **helps to form transnational communities of practice** by offering a rich pool of examples. For instance, those who want to know how a particular policy has been implemented in legislation can see what those in other jurisdictions have done with the same policy. Judges can see how judges elsewhere have thought about similar legal controversies.

Open legal information brings predictability to the legal climate, and predictability brings economic growth. The bottom 20 economies listed in the World Bank “Doing Business” Survey are the ones where it is hardest to undertake the simple legal activities associated with starting businesses and enforcing contracts. In their words, economic development requires rules that “clarify property rights, reduce the cost of resolving disputes, increase the predictability of economic interactions and rules that provide contractual partners with core protections against abuse”. We believe that the ability to find and use the law is a fundamental part of the solution to those problems, a solution that we and other LIIs provide every day.

Growing the economy, advancing social justice, and fostering global understanding are just a few of the transformational ideals that we have the ability to advance by making legal information open, available, and accessible. But like all worthwhile pursuits, these require tremendous effort and continual investment. We have the effort, but we rely on supporters like you for the investment. Your contributions to help advance the cause of open access around the world will enable us to share what we have learned and make a lasting impact on the nations and people who need us most.