

Justice Zarella's Remarks

Swearing In Ceremony

November 5, 2012

Thank you Justice Rogers. I welcome your invitation to address the candidates today, and I am honored to be part of this momentous occasion in their lives. To the candidates, I congratulate you for earning your way to this day. This is truly an important day for you, your family and friends, and for all the members of the bench and bar.

This Court recognized twelve years ago that the importance of this day was not being appropriately celebrated, and it determined that a more fitting ceremony and recognition should take place. Over those twelve years, we have held 23 swearing-in ceremonies and have admitted and welcomed to the bar of the state of Connecticut 6,516 candidates. Every one of those past candidates rightfully sat here, as you do now, in the glow of their accomplishments. They also were excited about their future and yet harbored secret fears of the unknown. Finally they had become attorneys, but now what. Some had jobs—some didn't. Most probably had concerns about the new world they were entering, whether or not they would survive the practice of law and how would they learn the intricacies of practice without committing malpractice. There always exists a certain fear of the unknown but that can be healthy.

This day is important to you because, for most, it is the culmination of your formal education. After years of study and struggle in the classroom and interning in courts or

law offices, that phase of your career has been successfully completed. It is also important because in a few minutes, you will become members of the bar with a license to practice law for your own benefit and the benefit of others. You can begin a career, not merely a job; a passion, not merely a career. The challenges you will face in the practice of law will be numerous. In no previous time period, that I can remember and that covers many years, has the delivery of legal services faced so many challenges. Those challenges will be up to you and your colleagues to face, analyze, and overcome. It is your responsibility to become active not just in your representation of your clients but also in devising changes to the system, where needed, to insure the continuation of the delivery of services to all in an efficient, cost effective and appropriate manner. Remember the rule of law includes the concept of fair and equal access to the judicial system to all who are aggrieved.

This day is an important and exciting day for your friends and family as well. Over the course of the past twelve years all of us on the bench have observed the obvious pride and excitement that they have shown. Those feelings are all the more real for me today because in swearing you in, I will also be swearing in my son. So in expressing my feelings today about this event in my son's life, I know I will be speaking for my wife and family as well as my son's friends. I also can say with great assurance that I will be expressing the shared emotions of each of your parents and friends as well.

As parents we have been there in one way or another throughout your growth into adulthood. We have shared the good times and the bad times. We have helped in

every possible way and today your accomplishments make us justly proud of you and make worthwhile all the sacrifices that we as parents have made. While we did this for each of you, we also did it for ourselves. We recognize that it is the succeeding generation that controls and shapes the future. All we can do is hope to instill in you the tools necessary to be successful at it. So we applaud your accomplishments and look forward to all your future successes. No one is more excited or proud of you than we are.

As I mentioned the members of the bench and bar also recognize the significance of your entry to the bar. They are present here today to offer their congratulations. The members of the bench and bar know the problems that face the system—the threats to judicial independence, the importance of delivering services to the needy, the problems created by the significant growth in pro se litigants, the need to keep the increasing incivility in our public discourse from spreading further into the practice of law. They have been there and have worked on all of these problems and many more. They welcome you because, like the parents in this room, they too recognize that it is to your generation that they will be handing over the baton, to continue to wrestle with and solve these and other problems. But they are here to offer you something in exchange for your willingness to take up the mantle. They offer you their experiences through various mentoring programs so that you may avoid some of the pitfalls that the practice of law creates. They offer continuing education courses so that you may grow in the knowledge of your specialty, and they offer programs so that you can become actively involved in meeting the various problems I have just

mentioned. They also offer you the collegial atmosphere that comes with meeting with those who have a common education, purpose and goal. I urge you to take them up on their offer by becoming active members in your state and local bar associations.

Finally, if I can offer you any one piece of advice that you carry out of here and tuck into your briefcase, it would be this: Be polite and recognize that the most effective advocacy comes about when we use reasoning and not tone or posturing. Antagonism is not advocacy. To the contrary, each of us has a duty to approach our colleagues with respect, no matter what the issue or how contentious it may be.

Without a doubt, you will have cases that are complicated by an unexpected twist or turn of events. You may face long nights, when you are still up at 4 a.m. trying to craft that last sentence of your final argument, a few short hours before you are to deliver it. You will encounter clients who want you to squeeze blood from a rock or pull a rabbit from a hat, and yet refuse to understand why neither option is particularly realistic.

On those challenging days, when you become frustrated, I would urge you to remember why you became a lawyer in the first place; to remember the first time that the words and the sanctity of the Constitution struck you. To recall when you understood the significance of the rule of law and why it matters to the people of this state. To know in your heart that you are indeed helping the people you represent.

On these days, when your responsibilities seem daunting, draw on the principles

that inspired you in the first place. Be ethical, be straightforward and don't be afraid to ask more experienced attorneys for advice. Above all, remember that the profession of law is not merely an occupation; it is a lifelong pursuit of justice. As you embark on this pursuit, I extend to you, on behalf of the entire Judicial Branch, our sincerest congratulations and best wishes.