

Remarks by the Honorable Linda Stewart Dalianis  
Chief Justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court  
December 15, 2010

Governor, Executive Councilors, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, members of the legislature, judges, staff, family and dear, dear friends, thank you for taking the time to join me this afternoon for a truly once-in-a-lifetime moment. Most of you are a part of my life, in one way or another, and I would not be in this place at this moment if it were not for you. When I look out on these wonderful students from Villa Augustina, I remember that, when I was a student there a long time ago, I believed there were no limits on what I could do. I hope that you believe that too—anything is possible.

All of you here today matter a great deal to me, and I hope you will bear with me while I give special thanks to a few of you.

I will of course, always be deeply grateful to Governor Lynch and the Executive Council for having the confidence in me to offer me the opportunity to lead New Hampshire's judicial branch as we move forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

On a personal level, I want to begin by thanking my husband, Griffin. We married when I was in law school, and through the ensuing forty years he has been my champion. Through it all, the only question he ever asked me was "How can I help you?"

My sons, Matt and Ben, deserve thanks, because they tolerated quite a bit due to my being a judge. In fact, when I was sworn in as an Associate Justice of the Superior Court, Matt was four and Ben was about 8 weeks away from being born. Today is Ben's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. As a junior justice, I had to be away from home quite a bit, since the junior justices then (not so much anymore) were assigned to preside at the farthest-flung courts. By the time I had enough seniority to be assigned near home, the boys were both old enough that they didn't really care whether I was around or not.

My three aunts are here today, my mother's sisters. They are the only ones who remain with us of five sisters and their husbands, all of whom—the husbands that is--served the United States in World War II. Their love and commitment to family and values gave my sister, brother and me, along with our 23 cousins, the strong foundation for becoming the people we are now.

Bob Bleakney is here today. When he was a partner at the law firm of Sullivan & Worcester and I was a law student, working my way through school in the early 1970s, he recognized promise in me and saw to it that I was

promoted from secretary to law clerk. And, Joe Kerrigan is here today, too. When I was seeking my first job as a lawyer in New Hampshire, at least in part because of that credential from Sullivan & Worcester, he decided to take a chance on me and offered me a job at his firm, Hamblett & Kerrigan. I believe I owe my career to these two extraordinary men, both willing to give an opportunity to a young woman at a time when the phrase “woman lawyer” was still something of an oxymoron.

I also wish to recognize our former Chief Justice, John Broderick, who, but for the fact that he’s traveling out of state, would have been here today. His leadership paved the way for me and left the judicial branch strong in spite of the difficulties of the times. My judicial colleagues, past and present, have always been essential to me. As the years have passed, they have taught me well and going forward I will need their assistance and wise counsel, because no person can do this job alone. To my law clerks, Anne Zinkin and Erin Feltes, I trust you will continue to remind me that while, as Chief Justice, I have new administrative duties, I am still a fulltime justice, and there are opinions to be written. My thanks to all of you.

Finally, on my first day as Chief Justice, I would like to say a few words directly to the people of New Hampshire. Our state constitution guarantees fair and equal access to justice, from Nashua to Pittsburg, for all our citizens. As Chief Justice, my promise to you is that I will work as hard as I can, with my colleagues in the Judicial Branch, and with the leaders of state government, to make sure that we continue to fulfill that obligation, especially as we continue to face the challenges ahead. You can be sure that I will do my very best, for my fellow citizens, for our state and for our system of justice.

Thank you.