

Good Afternoon

Thank you for that nice introduction and for assigning me the enjoyable task of introducing Congressman Courtney.

Although I'm not sure you need a relatively obscure retired Appellate Court judge, whom most of you don't know, to introduce your Congressman who most in the room would at least claim to know.

Actually, I think there is very apt interbranch symmetry to having a member of the judiciary introduce a member of Congress to a legal group on this celebration of law day where we pay particular tribute to our honoree's service to our community..

In 1958, then President Eisenhower designated Law Day as a day of national dedication to the principle of government under law and, three years later, Congress designated May 1st as law day.

Since then, groups throughout the country, particularly bar associations and courts, have participated in law day by sponsoring events, including luncheons such as this, to spotlight the role law plays in community life and in setting the parameters of our relationships with each other.

In furtherance, this bar association established the liberty bell award, given once a year at a law day celebration, to a person in our community whose activities reflect a commitment to the rule of law and the furtherance of democracy. I congratulate the bar in this year's selection of Congressman Courtney and I join you in congratulating our well deserving recipient.

This year's law day theme, American Democracy and the Rule of Law; why every Vote Matters is nuanced for it invites us to think not only about our nation's significant struggles to assure the right to vote without discrimination or favor but it also ties the enfranchisement to the rule of law. And so it should.

You all know the thumbnail of our history. From the Bill of Rights protecting individuals from the over reach of government , to the reconstruction amendments of the 1860s, limiting the right of states to enact discriminatory legislation, banning slavery and broadening the enfranchisement, to the 19th amendment belatedly extending the right to vote to women, and to LBJ's historic civil rights legislation of the 1960s, we have a shared history of struggle and recoupment, of advancement and aspiration. That struggle is not completed to assure to all, the right to vote without unnecessary restrictions or unreasonable impositions. We do well, therefore, to focus on the right to vote and the act of voting as core components of a viable constitutional democracy, one protected by the rule of law.

Of course, Congressman Courtney and I may have different answers to the question of why every vote matters. He certainly knows, having survived a very close contest in 2006 when the

outcome was decided by the smallest of fractions. But my take is less immediate and personal. I think every vote counts also because voting represents an affirmation by the voter of confidence and support for our political system. We vote not only in support of our chosen candidates, but also because we must participate in this manner in order to breathe meaning into our participatory form of government. And as holders of the legal candle in your communities, this is a message you can share with your families, peers, the extended community who look to you for leadership. Vote, not only because your ballot may influence an outcome but vote because you can, because our democracy depends on your intelligent participation to survive. If we quit on government, then how long do you think we can count on government to be responsive to us.

In this district, we do relatively well on this score. By my last read, more than 70% of eligible voters turned out in 2012, somewhat higher than the state and national average. That's of course

because we in southeast Connecticut are particularly enlightened.

Since I am a mandated neutral, it is not my place, indeed it would be improper, for me to sound an endorsement for Congressman Courtney's votes on any particular issues or even his general political philosophy because, as judges, at least where we are appointed, we are prevented from being in political life. I can, however, safely make one observation about the manner in which Congressman Courtney goes about representing us.

When I was preparing for this introduction, I went to his web site and was very pleased to see how much I could learn about his work. IT's a comprehensive site. There, he doesn't merely tout his non-controversial views, but he lays out his complete record of votes on legislation across the board. In this way, he permits, yes, encourages the interested reader to have a fuller understanding of his stances on the various issues he daily confronts in Congress. Now, I am not suggesting Congressman Courtney

deserves the Liberty Bell Award because he keeps a nice web site. Not at all. But I look at his web site as a window into his attitude toward public service and there I am impressed to see that he is completely transparent. This is how it should be; this transparency says to me that this Congressman knows he is accountable to the community he serves and he welcomes our thorough knowledge of his conduct on our behalf. In whatever arena of public service we work, save perhaps for legitimate security concerns, transparency is key to accountability, and accountability, in turn, feeds public confidence.

Let me step aside with this brief personal observation. In my professional life time, wherever I have gone, whether to work in a Peruvian barrio as an undergraduate, to visit pig farmers in rural Alabama or migrants workers in south Texas as law student, to travel to China in the 1980s as part of a legal delegation, or, more recently to Russia as a member of the Russian American Rule of Law Consortium, I have learned up close that the first sign of a

society at risk is the failure of the rule of law, where the promise of liberty and equality is only on distant dream and is not a daily reality. Application of rule of law principles distinguishes mob rule from a constitutional democracy where the voice of the majority is tempered by a coercive norm that requires that whatever any of us in the public trust does, we must do it fairly, equally and for all, the greatest and the least endowed, and without favor.

No matter whether you agree or disagree with any particular position Congressman Courtney has taken in elective office, his professional life reflects dedication to the application of the rule of law to the details of human transaction. As our representative in the national assembly, as a lawyer who practiced in Tolland and in Hartford where, as a trial judge, I was able to eye him closely and to enjoy his reasoned advocacy, and as a long term state legislator where he was esteemed on both sides of the aisle for his even handedness, his manner of conduct in all these endeavors has reflected a deep understanding and adherence to

the leavening benefit of the rule of law. I congratulate the bar on this year's selection and I happily introduce to you, Congressman Joseph Courtney.