

Good afternoon.

With his confirmation, Justice Drescher joins an unbroken chain of justices stretching back to the time of the Vermont Republic. For nearly 250 years the men and women of this Court have discharged the duties of Supreme Court Justice with fidelity. Each person who has served in this office brought with them a unique perspective and unique experiences. But each has entered this role with the same commitment—to serve this State with diligence and integrity. Justice Drescher is no exception.

But what are the requirements of the job?

Perhaps best known is the responsibility to hear and decide cases on appeal. However, there is much more that is required than that. The five justices must also administer the operations of the Vermont Judiciary, an independent branch of government with approximately 400 employees throughout the State. We are responsible for

attorney admissions and for attorney and judicial discipline. And we make the rules for the operation of our State's courts.

To handle these varied duties requires cooperation and collaboration between the five of us—which I find to be one of the most extraordinary and gratifying parts of the job—as well as the privilege to work with the dedicated and hard working members of the judiciary staff upon whom we rely so much.

As the expression goes, it is a big job. There will be disagreements between us. That is inevitable and that is why our Constitution requires there be five of us, not just one. Respectful disagreement and discussion are the roadmap to better decisions.

At its core being a justice means being a guardian of the public trust. Justice Drescher knows this. And he also knows our system of justice only works if people believe it to be fair. If faith in our

independent judiciary and its fairness is lost, our system of government is lost. Justice Drescher now joins the four of us and those justices who came before and those who will follow, in shouldering the heavy responsibility to preserve that public faith, a faith that the process is fair and that each parties' claims will be heard. A faith that has endured for 250 years and a faith over which we are the guardians.

Perhaps Socrates said it best. Four things belong to a judge: To hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly and to decide impartially. These things are as true today as they were over two thousand years ago.

On the Supreme Court we deal with the most important things in people's lives; their children, family relationships, their homes and property and their liberty. It doesn't get much more important than that. To every person who comes before us, their case is the most important case

we will ever hear and decide. Some are easier to decide than others, but each case requires considered review and decision making.

Mike, what is it that I wish for you as you embark upon your judicial career? To borrow a quote from Samuel Hazo, of which my friend and former colleague, Geoff Crawford, is particularly fond:

I wish you what I wish myself,
hard questions
and the nights to answer them,
the grace of disappointment
and the right to seem the fool
for justice. That's enough.
Cowards might ask for more.
Heroes have died for less.

On a broader scale, it is no secret that this is a time when our democratic institutions face significant challenges. We must rise to meet them, and the rule of law must and will prevail. I

am reminded of the comments made by Judge Frank Mahady in his speech to the Vermont Bar Association in 1992, addressing the challenges of those times, that the judiciary is the branch of government specifically designed to “thwart the tyranny of the majority and uphold the rights of all.”

There may be rough seas ahead, but as Ella Wheeler Wilcox’s said in her poem *Winds of Fate*: One ship drives east and another drives west with the self-same winds that blow. Tis the set of the sails and not the gales which tells us the way to go.

It is an honor to be here with you today as you set your sails as a Supreme Court Justice.

On behalf of the justices and members of the Vermont Judiciary, we welcome you, Justice Drescher, to the Vermont Supreme Court.

Thank you.