

2021
State of the Judiciary

Michael K. Davis, Chief Justice

**Recorded in the Courtroom of the
Wyoming Supreme Court
March 1, 2021**

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Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Governor and Madame First Lady, members of the 66th Legislature, elected officials, members of the judiciary, guests, and citizens of the Great State of Wyoming. It is, as always, an honor to speak with you today on behalf of the dedicated men and women of Wyoming's judicial branch of government. I wish we could all have been together in the beautifully restored House Chamber, as we were last year, but the pandemic has made that impossible. As you can see, I am speaking to you from the Supreme Court courtroom instead.

I am delighted to be able to report that the Wyoming judiciary is strong and healthy, despite the greatest challenges our branch of government, or any branch of our government, has endured in recent memory. Our greatest asset is our people, who are the best, and they have risen to and met the challenges.

I'd like to begin with a brief discussion of the unique nature of our branch and our constitutional duty to continue court operations.

Under both the Wyoming and United States Constitutions, the judicial branch has the obligation to hear and decide all cases that come before it in a timely manner. This is true whether those cases involve criminal charges, domestic violence protection, claims for damages, or any one of the many types of cases over which Wyoming courts have jurisdiction by virtue of the constitution or Wyoming statutes. The courts do not choose, and cannot choose, what cases are brought before them – they are simply mandated to move each and every case filed to a conclusion in a prompt manner that provides due process to the litigants. The phrase “The Rule of Law” is one that resonates with all of us. The courts apply, protect, preserve and defend the Rule of Law – not in some grand and sweeping manner, but in each and every case that comes before them, no matter how seemingly great or small it may seem to be. There is no such thing as an unimportant case to the litigants involved.

In each of the five years preceding the pandemic, there have been at least 150,000 filings in our circuit and district courts combined. Behind each filing is a person or persons, many if not most of whom are your constituents, and that number is pretty startling for a state with a population of slightly less than 570,000 people. The pandemic did not suddenly eliminate crime, or domestic violence, or stalking, or divorce, or commercial disputes that must be resolved in the courts. Crime is relentless and enduring, as is the ability of some people to inflict cruelty on others, including sometimes even their own children. Stress increases crime and domestic violence, and the pandemic has generated plenty of economic

and other stress. In tough economic times, a commercial dispute that might have been worked out may end up in the courts, as the participants are cornered economically. But no matter how great the threat of illness or death the pandemic presented, court personnel had to carry on and move those cases to resolution.

And they did, each and every one of them. We at the Supreme Court consulted with the Wyoming Department of Health in early March of last year – we are very grateful for the time the Department has spent advising us. Working with the circuit and district judges, we all figured out as best we could what needed to be done to protect judges, employees, lawyers, and litigants at the time. We had nowhere near the information we have today at that point – we didn't know if masks were useful, we thought the virus could be readily spread by touching surfaces where it was left by an infected person, and we lived in a world that didn't even know how or have the means to treat someone infected with the coronavirus. We all saw fatalities and enduring and debilitating injuries inflicted on citizens in other countries, our own country, ultimately our own state.

So we all did what we could with what we had and what we knew. The Supreme Court, in consultation and agreement with the district and circuit courts, began issuing a series of recommendations for operations of the trial courts based on what we knew. The initial effort we all agreed upon was to stay in business while minimizing courthouse traffic to control transmission of the virus. We were also mindful of the measures required by the executive branch led by Governor Gordon, and we complied with them.

Fortunately, we were far ahead of neighboring states in already having technology which immediately allowed remote hearings in most cases. We already had Microsoft Teams (which is similar to Zoom) available at all levels of the branch, and we had equipment to allow in-courtroom and remote use, including Surface Hubs, which are computers with very large monitors. Participants who did not have an internet connection could call in from a cellular or regular telephone, so they could be heard, and the business of the courts could continue. This started immediately in mid-March as the virus spread into our state.

A good many judicial branch employees could work productively from home as well, because we already had a robust virtual private network to connect them to the court network. They were sent home to work, and they rotated in and out of the trial courts to minimize the risk of spreading an infection that neither we nor anyone else understood at the time.

Since then, we have been able to upgrade our technological capabilities to a level other states would envy with CARES Act funds, thanks to the efforts of the judges who serve on our courtroom technology committee, the superhuman efforts of our tiny but

dedicated technology and fiscal staff, and excellent work by the contractor who worked on these projects.

Time marched on, and as we learned more about the virus, and we began to receive reliable information about how the disease was spread and how it could be contained, additional recommendations were issued in conjunction with the district and circuit courts. These recommendations led to a careful opening-up to in-person hearings in various cases, if the judge thought that was advisable, consulted with local health department officials, and had a plan to keep participants safe. This effort included personal protective equipment, masking, and social distancing for participants.

As a result of these efforts over the year since we began to feel the impact of the virus, the district and circuit courts have been able to keep up with their non-jury caseloads, so that there is no backlog. And, of course, a lot of work could be done in jury cases – there are pretrial hearings of various kinds that can be done remotely, and the judges did what they could, preparing the way for pretrial resolution or settlement, or the eventual jury trial if necessary.

But of course, jury trials are another matter. I'd like to take just a moment to remind you about the service jurors provide in our system. We draft them, as we used to draft young men into military service. We expect our jurors, from the age of majority up to 72, to report when they are summoned as jurors and to act as judges of the facts in jury trials. Many potential jurors are elderly – take Laramie County as an example. We have many retirees whose health is not perfect. Our trial courts could not expect these citizens to expose themselves to the risk of a deadly or at the very least debilitating disease unless we could assure them that they could serve safely.

It is not a choice whether to serve as a juror or not. In times when there was no pandemic abroad, jurors who failed to report for jury duty without an excuse were summoned to court and might be fined or even incarcerated. Those alternatives were unthinkable when you're talking about endangering the health of citizens who have done nothing wrong to assure jury trial for individuals who are often accused of unspeakable crimes. Our trial courts could not expect these citizens to expose themselves to the coronavirus – our branch had to assure them that they could serve safely without risking their health.

Over time, the Supreme Court, in conjunction with and by agreement, as always, with the district and circuit judges, developed recommendations for the conduct of jury trials. All court systems in this nation were struggling with the same issues, and a great deal was learned from their successes and failures.

Each of our trial courts had unique challenges – no two courthouses are the same, and often space for social distancing is scarce. Infection rates varied from county to county.

But over time, the trial courts have been able to schedule and to resume holding criminal and civil jury trials at both the district and circuit court levels. I want to make it clear that this was done through the extraordinary efforts of the district and circuit judges, and their excellent staffs, and the clerks of district court. I would also point out that by no means do all cases set for trial actually go to trial. The vast majority do not, because a firm trial date often leads to a plea agreement or a civil settlement. Our system is structured around that reality – if every case went to trial, we, like every other court system in the country, would be overwhelmed. We can expect what may in some districts be a backlog of jury cases to steadily reduce as some cases are tried and others are resolved by agreement.

I would take just a moment to compliment the attorneys and citizens who have participated in jury trials. Complaints from either have been rare, although there is some risk to anyone who might participate in a jury trial during the pandemic. I would also like to recognize the court personnel who daily expose themselves to some risk of infection, including the clerks of district court, who, although they are not technically judicial branch employees, are vital to the conduct of court business.

So to summarize this part of my address, non-jury cases are not backlogged in the trial courts, and our excellent trial judges are cutting away at the limited backlog of jury trials, which will go away over time by trial or settlement. Wyoming courts are open, have always been open, and will remain open for the citizens of Wyoming.

I will just briefly comment on the operations of the Supreme Court. As an appellate court, we do not conduct trials – we instead review the record of trials conducted in the district courts, and occasionally the circuit courts, to determine if there is any reversible error in their proceedings. Practically this has meant that we were able to continue our work with little disruption, since we do not conduct trials and do not summon juries. During March and April of 2020, we decided cases on the briefs without oral arguments from attorneys. But beginning in May, we began to hold arguments by video. We prefer in-person arguments, but we were able to have a meaningful dialogue about cases with counsel by video, and we continue to do so. Some attorneys have indicated that they actually prefer video argument, because it eliminates the need for them to travel. We will see how the COVID experience impacts our future.

In any event, we are up to date on our appellate decisions, and we have no reason to believe that we will not continue to receive a substantial number of appeals and decide them in a very timely manner. I would put our time to disposition of appeals up against that of any appellate court anywhere.

The Supreme Court is also charged with supporting the trial courts, and we have certainly done that in these troubled times. Court administration and two justices meet weekly with the presidents of the district and circuit judge conferences to keep ahead of

coronavirus issues. We have been able to help the trial courts out with personal protective equipment and various research resources on how the courts of other states are managing during the pandemic. At one point, our staff obtained hand sanitizer that came in gallon jugs bearing the logo of a vodka distillery, which they transferred to applicators. They did this in our library, which has been closed to the public. I only know about this from watching *Breaking Bad*, but with our people masked and gowned up and filling bottles, I thought the operation looked a lot like the meth labs on that show. Then our staff delivered the PPE and sanitizer to the trial courts around the state.

Our building has remained closed to the public. I think we all look forward to the day when we can reopen and offer tours to adults and students again. We were compelled to close the Judicial Learning Center that was funded in part by this body and in part by private donations until the pandemic is under control. The halls of our building, even when it is open, are usually as quiet as a mausoleum, and I think we all long to hear the young voices of students shattering the stillness with their excited chatter as they visit the Learning Center.

Our branch has also been responsible for assuring access to justice for the least financially fortunate among us. The pandemic has hit the poor harder than anyone. The Access to Justice Commission, Equal Justice Wyoming, Legal Aid of Wyoming, and other Wyoming civil legal service providers, collaborated to complete a state-wide Civil Legal Needs Assessment. Having long known that needs of Wyoming's economically disadvantaged citizens far exceed available legal resources, the collaborators contracted with Datacorp, a Wyoming company, to collect qualitative and quantitative data to help policy makers and legal service providers more fully understand Wyoming's low-income population, its civil legal needs, and how those needs are distributed across the state. The Needs Assessment confirmed that the area of greatest need centers around family law. However, new food insecurity and employment data revealed an emerging impact of the COVID pandemic on the prevalence of landlord/tenant, estate management, domestic violence and other issues. The Assessment, which was made public in August 2020, can be found on the Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission's webpage.

The Supreme Court continues to move forward with development of the Chancery Court, a specialized business/complex litigation court established by legislation in the 2019 session. The Court, under the leadership of Justice Kate Fox and with the hard work of judges and attorneys who serve on her Chancery Court Committee, is poised to complete the work necessary to bring the Chancery Court on-line within the time frames required by statute. However, in light of the financial issues facing the State, there is legislation pending that would allow certain sitting district judges skilled in the resolution of commercial disputes to act as chancery court judges until our state gets on its feet financially again. Other district judges would help those judges out with other parts of

their caseload. If what I hear from the blockchain experts is true, there should be a significant increase in the overall workload the district judges have agreed to take on, and we thank them for stepping up.

We expect to have a case management system and electronic filing system in place for Chancery Court by the end of this year. The district judges can use their own courtrooms until one or more permanent chancery court judges can be selected and permanent facilities constructed. In any event, one way or another, the chancery court will be open for business, with electronic filing, by December 2021.

Our branch has also, through the concerted efforts of a very small applications staff, upgraded the case management system in our circuit courts, the courts which handle the largest volume of cases, ranging from traffic tickets to high misdemeanors. There was nothing wrong with the old system, called Full Court, but it was no longer maintained by the manufacturer and had to be upgraded to a new web-based system. Our small staff developed a process for migrating data and standing up the new system, which is called Full Court Enterprise. Training and other activities amounted to about 100 man-hours for each of the 24 circuit courts, not to mention about 500 hours to develop a manual for training the circuit court clerks. The manual developed for use by the circuit court clerks has been requested by other states, including Montana, since it outlines a highly efficient model for standing up that system.

The same small staff has begun the process of replacing WYUSER, the district court case management system, with Full Court Enterprise, and will begin to pilot that system in selected courts in July, and gradually move into all the other district courts after that.

Thanks to an appropriation in the last session, we have the funds required to implement a state-of-the-art electronic filing system in the district courts after we begin standing up Full Court Enterprise, and we have entered into a contract with File and Serve Express for that purpose. We formed a committee composed principally of attorneys with experience in electronic filing in our Supreme Court, the federal court here in Wyoming, and in other states, and they selected File and Serve Express. Other states using the program gave it rave reviews. The program will offer a variety of services for electronic filers, including collection and transmission of filing fees to the district court clerks, all on-line.

I know we would all like to see the district court e-filing system in place sooner than it is projected to be. In 2019, at the suggestion of a member of your leadership, we commissioned a study to be done by a reputable firm that has consulted with courts around the country and the world. This firm came highly recommended by the court administrator in Maryland – it had done work for that state.

The company, Justice Management Institute, concluded that our branch was on the right track to get to digital courts. It also noted, however, that based on efforts in other states, our small IT and applications staff is short at least eight employees to complete the necessary work in the time frame we have planned. My money is on our small staff to meet the goals it has set, due to its extreme dedication and skill. I see absolutely no chance of funding for additional employees to help these folks out, and therefore the timetable will, at best, be what is currently projected.

At the same time, the Supreme Court electronic filing system, the first of its kind in the nation, has reached the end of its life, although it still works pretty well. That system, called C-Track, is now used in 19 court systems around the country, but ours is out of date. In the last session, you appropriated \$1,741,000 dollars to replace the system, which cannot be upgraded. We have not yet spent those funds because, as I will shortly explain, we do not know for sure if that appropriation will survive these difficult times. In the meantime, we continue to hold our breath and hope for the best, and so far, so good.

I want to keep this speech as short as I can, and so I won't go into all the detail I might. I would simply instead refer the curious to our judicial branch website. There you will find updates on efilings, the chancery court, all pandemic orders we have entered, the operating plans of each and every district and circuit court, the study I just referred to, and a wealth of other information. And our staff is also available to speak with you and help you find what you might be interested in.

Now is the time to speak of the other great issue of this time, which is probably both a partial result of the pandemic and partially an independent product of the nature of our state's economy, and that is of course the revenue downturn that affects all three branches of our government. As I begin to talk about how our branch of government has tightened its belt, I would again like to just touch on the nature of the judicial branch and its operations.

As I have already said, the judicial branch has no control over the number of type of cases that come before it. Those decisions are made to some extent by this body, which decides what conduct will violate the law and become crimes. They are also made by the county and district attorneys, who prosecute crimes, and who pursue juvenile cases, including actions to prevent abuse and neglect of helpless children who cannot protect themselves. Those filing decisions are also made by entities or individuals ranging from the unwed mother who must seek child support for her children, or the spouse who can no longer remain in a marital relationship, or a multi-national corporation which has a commercial dispute with another similar entity based on a mineral development contract with millions of dollars at stake.

Once those cases hit our system, judges have no option but to resolve them in accordance with the law and the constitution. They cannot say “I’m sorry, Mr. Prosecutor, but there have just been too many murder cases this year. You’ll have to let this accused person go for now and try again later when things look up economically.” Justice must be done in a timely manner, for truly, justice delayed is for all practical purposes, justice denied.

I also want to point out that the entire Wyoming judicial branch budget is less than three per cent of the overall state budget. Our branch budget is composed of 92% personnel costs. Our employees, and the employees of the elected clerks of district court, allow our courts to continue to function and to fulfill their constitutional and statutory duties.

I would also point out that our branch actually has a system to determine whether we have the right number of judges and circuit court clerks to handle their caseloads – no more and no less. Periodically, we retain an independent contractor statistician who does work for courts around the country, and that person conducts a weighted workload study to weigh the cases the circuit and district courts have. This is not cheap – it costs about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars per court level. Once the study is complete, we are then able to apply those weights to the actual cases in the system, and to determine if we have too few, too many, or just enough personnel, including judges. And as the workload changes, as by adoption of new statutes adding to the work to be done by the courts, we eventually have to have a new study done, which we can then use for a few years until things change again. Before the pandemic, we were already short about four district judges according to the workload study, and that was before they agreed to take on chancery court duties.

There has been discussion in the executive branch of cutting ten percent of its budget. A cut of that magnitude in the judicial branch would eliminate the entire budget of eight courts. We most assuredly do not have eight courts to spare, given what has been shown by our weighted caseload studies. A 20% across the board cut would wipe out the budgets of sixteen courts.

My simple math shows that 10% of 3% (actually less) is 3 tenths of one percent. That would be more than enough to cripple a Wyoming judicial branch that is highly functional, but it could not contribute meaningfully to resolution of our state’s budget problems. I will suggest that it would only add to them by sending a message to companies thinking about relocating to our state that a functional court system is not a priority, and by creating backlogs of cases that would have to be resolved later.

But all levels of the judiciary have taken steps to cut what they can. At the Supreme Court, we early on took the following steps:

- We eliminated or combined two positions in the Chancery Court.

- We were able to eliminate and combine two positions at the Supreme Court.
- Although it was embarrassing to have to do so, we have given notice to the National Center for State Courts that we will no longer be able to pay our dues, which are about \$200,000 per biennium.
- We have reduced operational costs and contracts, and expenditures for print materials and subscriptions for legal research.
- Contracts have been terminated if they could be.
- We have reduced court automation contracts, such as one for judge tools that would have helped make hearings more efficient. We also cut our planned hardware replacement program.

These reductions did not cut fat – our operations will eventually suffer as a result of these. Like a reduction in the rations of soldiers, these cuts may not cause an immediate failure of justice, but they would ultimately weaken the system in ways that would be unfortunate for our citizens.

The circuit courts have little to cut from their budgets, but they have done what they can. Two full-time magistrate positions have been eliminated. The circuit judges have also stopped using part-time magistrates. The magistrates covered certain court activities when the judges were unavailable. Because of the excellent technology we have, the judges will cover for each other remotely. That means that when a two in the morning request for a search warrant in a driving under the influence case comes in, a circuit judge in Sweetwater County may be responding to a Campbell County case.

The budgets of the district courts are separate from that of the Supreme Court. The district judges also have cut what they can from those budgets, but more significantly, as I have already said and if this body approves, they have selected three judges skilled in commercial case resolution to serve as chancery court judges until things improve economically and one or more permanent chancery court judges can be selected. I repeat that this is not an insignificant sacrifice – if predictions by prominent legislators as to the use of the chancery court are correct, there will be considerable work for those three judges and the rest of the district judges who will have to help them with their routine caseload. Moreover, their efforts will make it possible to open up the chancery court by the end of the year, which I am told will tend to spur economic development through, among other things, available resolution of blockchain controversies.

Added together, these changes add up to a reduction branch-wide of 3.9%. I hope that we will be able to preserve the funds made available for district and chancery court electronic filing, which I have already described, and for replacement of the Supreme

Court's electronic filing system. Eliminating funding for efilings in the district and chancery courts would result in additional delay in getting to digital courts. And, if the Supreme Court's system fails without a replacement available, we will be back to operating as we did over a decade ago, with paper. I do not believe that would be impressive to business organizations sizing up this state as a possible location for their operations, and it would be a definite step back.

I would like to touch on one more issue that relates to the relationship between our two branches of government. I want to emphasize that we could improve our communications, and our branch, which is poorly understood, could and should take time to explain its process to you. There seem to be a great many inaccurate rumors about court operations in this day and age. If you need to know the facts, there is at least one courthouse in every county, with a circuit and district court based there. Although neither judges nor clerks of court can comment on a pending or resolved case, they can and will tell you, as representatives of the people, what's going on in general terms of court operations. For example, are the circuit courts hearing landlord-tenant cases? Are divorces being heard in the district court? The answer is "yes, they are." If you don't know whom to contact to learn more, please feel free to email me or call my office, and I will refer your inquiry to the proper person for a definitive answer.

As I already mentioned, we maintain an excellent judicial branch website that is intended to let the public know what is going on in our branch. It is free and open to the public, and of course to you. Ours is a data-driven branch, and we store a great deal of data there.

At a meeting of the National Conference of Chief Justices a while back, I learned from the Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court that that court holds what it calls a "Law School for Legislators" to inform Illinois lawmakers about the Illinois judicial branch. Our own Justice Keith Kautz, who manages judicial education for our branch, and who has spoken frequently to civic organizations, is prepared to provide a program of about one hour or so to any legislator interested in it, with assistance from our court staff and the circuit and district judges. We would record and store this on our website for future viewing. I hope we can work something out to make that available to you.

I would add one last comment. As I have said more than once, our branch of government is going through what may be the most difficult time in its history. Our trial courts and trial judges are being tested by challenges from the pandemic and from the current economic downturn and they have met them. I would put our trial courts' performance in the pandemic – and before – up against that of the courts of any state, despite our small budget and chronically overworked staff.

The point I'm angling toward is that this may not be the best time to legislatively tinker with something that is working, particularly without consulting with the people who do the work of the courts. They are like a military unit that is pinned down by powerful forces, yet is holding its ground against all odds with few resources. In other words, this is not a great time for untested experimentation.

I remind you that everything our courts do is governed by the constitutional requirement to provide due process. Due process just means giving notice of what is happening in a case, and giving people affected in that case a fair opportunity to be heard before a decision is made. Although our courts strive to be as efficient as possible, our constitution does not focus on efficiency – it focuses on assuring that the Rule of Law governs, and that everyone receives a fair process that protects the rights of all concerned. Not everyone is happy with court outcomes – you can pretty much figure at least fifty per cent of litigants – those who lost – will not be. Sometimes both sides lose. Satisfaction and happiness are simply not byproducts of the judicial process. Fortunately, respect is and has been a by-product of the process. Most often, those who are disappointed by the outcome of a case can still recognize that they were heard and treated fairly.

I have seen draft legislation that seems intended to address perceived problems in court operations that don't actually exist, and which may run into constitutional and statutory obstacles according to Legislative Service Office commentary. Some of the drafts seem to have been created in a vacuum of information about actual court processes and what is happening on the ground. I can tell you that after over forty years as a trial lawyer, a trial judge, and a Supreme Court justice, I do not know enough to suggest changes to the operation of the trial courts without talking to the judges and court personnel doing the work.

I would simply suggest that the district and circuit judges are happy to talk about their operations with legislators, as is our court. Even a process that has been operating successfully in the Anglo-American countries for centuries can always be improved, I'll grant you that. But I can't help but believe that knowing how it does operate and why it does so might be a good starting place, and that the knowledge base of a disgruntled litigant or rumor may not be the best launching pad for meaningful change. If you inquire, I think you'll find that our branch is in fact in very good shape compared to that of our sister states, and that the employees and judges daily enforce the Rule of Law while still moving cases through the system promptly so that justice is not denied.

Before I close, I wanted to take the usual step of describing transitions in our branch. Retired District Judge Art Hanscom, who sat in Albany County for many years, died on February 20, 2020. Judge Bob Castor, long-time circuit judge sitting in Albany County retired, and Judge Rob Sanford replaced him on July 4, 2020 – that's right, on the 4th of July, literally. Long-term Laramie County Circuit Judge Denise Nau retired, and she was

replaced by Judge Sean Chambers on July 6, 2020. Judge Vincent Case, who sat in Converse County for many years, retired, and Judge Clark Allan took his place in January of 2021. Sixth Judicial District Judge Nick Deegan, long-time public servant and judge, and a former member of the Wyoming House of Representatives, retired and was replaced by Judge Stuart Healy in December of 2020.

We thank all of the judges who have served for their many years of faithful service, and we thank all of those who have undertaken to fill their very large shoes for their willingness to do so in this extremely challenging time. You all have your work cut out for you.

We have our own transitions at the Wyoming Supreme Court. Court Administrator Lily Sharpe, who many of you know from her service at LSO, and who made us all smile with her ever-ready and infectious laugh, retired in February. After an exhaustive process that included a number of excellent in and out of state applicants, our general counsel Elisa Butler was selected to be our new Court Administrator. She has been a joy to work with, and I know she will be reaching out to you, if you don't reach out to her first, to see how she can assist you in your work.

I have more good news to close with. This will be the last time I have the privilege of making a State of the Judiciary Address to this body. If we were meeting in person, I'm sure that would have drawn some applause because I have talked for quite a while today. I will reach the age of mandatory retirement before you convene in 2022, and so Justice Kate Fox will take over as Chief Justice on July 1 of this year to assure a smooth transition. Justice Fox will become the second woman Chief Justice in Wyoming history. She has basically served as a deputy chief since I became Chief Justice, no doubt in an effort to try to keep me from making mistakes, and she will be able to take over seamlessly mid-year. Our State and our branch will be fortunate to have such a great Chief Justice.

For my part, I want to thank you for the consideration you have shown me, the Supreme Court, and the judicial branch. The founders of our republic and our great state intended for there to be tension between the three branches of government, so that we would all be keeping an eye on each other to preserve our democracy, and to uphold the Rule of Law. That tension, which we have in a healthy measure, has not prevented an appropriately cordial and respectful relationship between us, and the rest of our branch and I are very grateful for that mutual respect.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you. You face unprecedented challenges this session and beyond, but we all know you are more than equal to the enormous task before you. Thank you for your selfless service. Good luck, and Godspeed. Thank you.