

And what about this new responsibility, being a judge? What did I want everyone to leave here today thinking - about me maybe, but more so our judiciary?

Let's start with this. Being a judge is really hard. Really, really hard.

Chief Justice Fair McEvers touched on the many things a district court judge must do.

District Court judges hear anything from a criminal case, to wills and estates, to a commitment hearing for someone struggling with mental health, to dissolving a business partnership with hundreds of assets, to a divorce involving children, to deciding if a 50-page contract has been breached. All in the same week - sometimes in the same day.

Throw in that we work with the elderly, adults, teenagers AND young children. The abused, the disabled, the vulnerable, individuals with special needs. Defendants and victims of terrible crimes. Defendants who were themselves at some point in their life a victim. Highly educated people and individuals who cannot read or write.

District Court judges see addiction and poverty and, quite frankly, spend a lot of time being part of the most stressful, scary and worst points in people's lives.

So why do it? That's what some of you have to be thinking. It's what everyone in a robe here today contemplated before they sought to join the judiciary.

I can't speak for all of them, but I can tell you what I know I felt. **Let it be me.**

Let me be the person who shows compassion and treats people with dignity, regardless of their role in my courtroom or their current situation in their life at that point. Let me be the person who tries to make sense of the complex, to find the answers to difficult legal questions AND to find ways to explain those answers to court users who ARE NOT lawyers and judges.

Let me make participants feel heard by an unbiased judiciary, even if they do not agree with the ultimate decision I reach.

Let me make decisions without regard for public reaction, because it is a decision rooted in the law, a decision that administers the law fairly.

Let me grapple with difficult decisions and balances between second chances and accountability, between rehabilitation and keeping the community safe.

Let me work hard, so I am prepared each day. Let me make mistakes and learn from them. Let me learn from more than just mistakes, from fellow judges, clerks, attorneys, court partners, and really anyone in life who have a perspective that is not my own.

Let me act with integrity and transparency. Let me uphold, no... heighten the public trust in our democracy's vital third branch of government, our judiciary.

Let me use my skills and education and knowledge and my own unique approach to life and to people to do all of these hard things to the best of my ability. Let me serve humbly and diligently, never forgetting the immense burden I swear to carry each day.

Because **that** is the thing about judges. We cannot make life perfect. We can't prevent trauma, conflict, upheaval, violence in people's lives. We can't fix addiction, though I promise you every person here today in a robe wishes we could.

But we can be the ones, **we are honored to be the ones**, who take on these profound responsibilities to deliver impartial justice and uphold the rule of law and our democracy.

Thank you all for your time and for your presence here today.