

Chief Justice Investiture Ceremony

REMARKS FROM NORTH CAROLINA CHIEF JUSTICE MARK MARTIN

3 September 2014

It is an honor to be installed as the 28th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. I thank Governor McCrory for the confidence he has shown in me and for trusting me to lead the Judicial Branch of government.

During my tenure on this Court, beginning in 1999, I have had the distinct honor and privilege of serving under four chief justices: Burley B. Mitchell, Jr., Henry Frye, I. Beverly Lake, Jr., and Sarah Parker. I'll never forget the day when I was appointed to the bench and the kindness that Justice Jim Exum showed me on my first day of work, on December 30th, 1992. These leaders of our Court and judicial system fully devoted themselves to the fair and impartial administration of justice. They set a very high bar for future chief justices to follow.

I especially want to recognize Chief Justice Parker, under whom I served as Senior Associate Justice since 2006. Chief Justice Parker cares deeply about North Carolina's courts. I hope to carry on her strong work ethic in the pursuit of justice.

Our founders clearly understood the importance of our courts, and that is why they made the courts a co-equal branch of government; a co-equal branch which has a critical function to perform on behalf of the people of North Carolina. That function requires adequate resources, and I plan to ensure that the courts are adequately funded.

As part of the twenty-first century, we know the courts will need to look at innovation and efficiency. We know that concepts of virtual courthouses and e-filing that are being pursued in other states must be diligently planned out, carried out, and implemented here. The public demands no less, and twenty-first century public expectations must be met. We must focus on our core functions as courts: upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice in our day. We need to have the resources to get it right the first time, and yet also have the accountability and integrity to admit when we have made an error. We will begin this process here, right at the Supreme Court, by taking steps to hear more fully briefed and argued appeals.

And how can our way of life, our constitutional rights and responsibilities move forward into the future unless our young people understand the importance of our Constitution, the rule of law. Civics education should not be a recommended subject. It should be part of every schoolhouse across the land. Equal access to justice — if we do not ensure that each and every person has access to our courts then we have failed as a people. It is our compact as citizens, for our common bonds as Americans and North Carolinians far outweigh anything that would potentially divide us. Finally, institutional transparency and accountability. The courts exist for the people of North Carolina, and they are our accountability.

I plan to follow my predecessors' devotion to service of the public as I lead the Supreme Court and supervise the administration of justice during this appointive term of office. Earlier this year, I issued an administration of justice plan designed to strengthen our courts. I will not be able to complete this work alone. Instead, I look forward to working with other justice system stakeholders, the public, and the leadership of the two other branches of government to implement this plan for the benefit of the people of this great state.

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Thank you so much for being a part of this ceremony today. I so appreciate your presence. As the ceremony concludes, I would ask you to stay in your seats when the ceremony is concluded so that the Justices and the Governor can leave this room. After greeting the Governor and my fellow Justices briefly in the Conference Room, I will go to the History Room on the first floor and look forward to greeting each of you there.

Madam Clerk, please adjourn this ceremonial session.