

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Statement on the Death of Former United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor

December 2, 2023

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was an American icon, the first woman on our Nation's highest Court. She spent her career committed to the stable center, pragmatic and in search of common ground. I did not agree with all of her opinions, but I admired her decency and unwavering devotion to the facts, to our country, to active citizenship and the common good.

Defined by her no-nonsense Arizona ranch roots, Justice O'Connor overcame discrimination early on, at a time when law firms too often told women to seek work as secretaries, not attorneys. She gave her life to public service, even holding elected office, and never forgot those ties to the people whom the law is meant to serve. She sought to avoid ideology and was devoted to the rule of law and to the bedrock American principle of an independent judiciary. Unrelenting in her interrogations of attorneys before the Court, she was willing to learn and to change, open to the experience of fellow Americans, and always conscious of the law's real impact on their lives.

As a U.S. Senator on the Judiciary Committee, I remember the hope surrounding her historic nomination to the Supreme Court. The Senate voted 99–0 in her favor, proof that our Nation can come together to move history forward.

Justice O'Connor never quit striving to make this Nation stronger, retiring only to care for her husband John, the love of her life. She never quit calling on us all to engage with our country and with one another, and her institute's work to promote civics education and civil discourse has touched millions. She knew that for democracy to work, we have to listen to each other and remember how much more we all have in common as Americans than what keeps us apart.

Our hearts today are with Justice O'Connor's three sons Scott, Brian, and Jay; her brother Alan; her six grandchildren; and all those who loved her.

NOTE: The statement referred to Alan Day, Sr., brother, and Courtney, Adam, Keely, Weston, Dylan, and Luke O'Connor, grandchildren, of former Associate Justice O'Connor.

Categories: Statements by the President : Former U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, death.

Names: Day, Alan, Sr.; O'Connor, Adam; O'Connor, Brian; O'Connor, Courtney; O'Connor, Dylan; O'Connor, Jay; O'Connor, Keely; O'Connor, Luke; O'Connor, Sandra Day; O'Connor, Scott; O'Connor, Weston.

Subjects: Deaths, former U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; Women's rights and gender equality.

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