

RETIREMENT OF JUSTICE BRENNAN

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1990

Present: CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST, JUSTICE WHITE, JUSTICE MARSHALL, JUSTICE BLACKMUN, JUSTICE STEVENS, JUSTICE O'CONNOR, JUSTICE SCALIA, and JUSTICE KENNEDY.

THE CHIEF JUSTICE said:

Before calling the first case for argument this morning, it is appropriate for us to note that today, for the first time in 34 years, a Term of the Court commences without our colleague Justice William J. Brennan sitting beside us on the bench. For the past 15 years, since the retirement of Justice William O. Douglas, Justice Brennan was the senior Associate Justice of the Court. Following his retirement this summer, his colleagues on the Court joined in sending him a letter which reads as follows:

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHAMBERS OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE,
Washington, D. C., September 6, 1990.

Dear Bill:

Your decision to retire has already brought forth from others numerous accolades rightly testifying to your accomplishments as a Justice of this Court. You served here for nearly thirty-four years—a period exceeded by only four other members of the Court. But your profound influence upon American constitutional law arises not merely from the

length of your service, but from the many notable opinions which you authored during that time.

We, who have been your colleagues, have had the benefit of knowing you in a way that scholars viewing your place in history cannot. You have been our companion in our daily sojourns on the bench and in our sessions around the conference table. The personal warmth which you radiate has enriched all of our lives, and has inspired all of us to maintain the cordial relations so necessary among those who may find themselves in disagreement with one another in the work which they mutually undertake.

We will miss your wise counsel in our deliberations, but we know that present surcease from the labors of the Court bids fair to restore you to the good health which we so very much wish for you.

Affectionately,

WILLIAM H. REHNQUIST

BYRON R. WHITE

THURGOOD MARSHALL

HARRY A. BLACKMUN

JOHN P. STEVENS

SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR

ANTONIN SCALIA

ANTHONY M. KENNEDY

Justice Brennan replied as follows:

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHAMBERS OF JUSTICE WILLIAM J. BRENNAN, JR. (*Retired*),
Washington, D. C., September 25, 1990.

Dear Colleagues:

I am deeply touched by your letter regarding my retirement. Its gracious sentiments reflect the very collegiality to which you pay tribute, and it is therefore a fitting keepsake—one that I and my family will always cherish—of our work together. The opportunity to have served on this Court has,

of course, been a rare privilege, but equally rare has been the chance to form so many rich friendships in the course of that work.

I had hoped that this happy identity between colleagues and friends would persist for many more years. Indeed, my reluctance to retire from the Court was sharpened by an awareness that I will no longer sit with each of you on the bench or in the conferences, sharing in the work of this mutual enterprise. I believe the Court has achieved much in recent decades, and the pleasure of reflecting on that record is strengthened by the knowledge that we have participated in these accomplishments together. But I know that friendships forged in this Court are sustained by more than a common endeavor, and I therefore take comfort in the expectation that our personal ties will endure in the years ahead. With warm best wishes to each of you.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. BRENNAN, JR.

