

RETIREMENT OF JUSTICE O'CONNOR

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2006

Present: CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS, JUSTICE STEVENS, JUSTICE SCALIA, JUSTICE KENNEDY, JUSTICE SOUTER, JUSTICE THOMAS, JUSTICE GINSBURG, JUSTICE BREYER, and JUSTICE ALITO.

THE CHIEF JUSTICE said:

Before calling the first case, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the Courtroom this morning of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and I would like to read into the records of the Court an exchange of correspondence. The first letter is dated January 31, 2006, the effective date of Justice O'Connor's retirement. It is to her from me and it reads as follows:

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHAMBERS OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE,
Washington, D. C., January 31, 2006.

Dear Sandra:

I am honored to transmit to you the letter that the members of the Court with whom you sat for so many years signed shortly after you announced your retirement last summer. After serving with you for only a few months, I understand how sincere and heartfelt their sentiments are. I join them wholeheartedly, with added appreciation for your invaluable guidance and support over the past several months.

Sincerely,
JOHN

THE CHIEF JUSTICE said:

I would like now to invite JUSTICE STEVENS to read the letter that was signed last summer.

JUSTICE STEVENS said:

This letter is dated July 18, 2005, and it was written by William H. Rehnquist, and signed by all of Justice O'Connor's then colleagues.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHAMBERS OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE,
Washington, D. C., July 18, 2005.

Dear Sandra:

Your decision to retire brings a sense of loss to each of us. When you came to the Court twenty-four years ago, you faced the same challenges that new members of the institution have always faced. But in addition you faced a challenge that none of them had faced—you were the first woman justice. You have met all of these challenges with ability and élan.

Your opinions have left their mark on every major field of the Court's jurisprudence. You have also lent your hand to numerous extra-judicial activities—the ABA's CEELI, for example, and the Court's Renovation Committee. We have all profited from your contributions during our twelve years together, and will miss you greatly.

Affectionately,
WILLIAM H. REHNQUIST
JOHN PAUL STEVENS
ANTONIN SCALIA
ANTHONY M. KENNEDY
DAVID H. SOUTER
CLARENCE THOMAS
RUTH BADER GINSBURG
STEPHEN BREYER

THE CHIEF JUSTICE said:

The final letter is dated today, March 27th, and it reads:

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHAMBERS OF JUSTICE SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR (*Retired*),
Washington, D. C., March 27, 2006.

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the kind letter each of you signed on the occasion of my retirement.

I look back on my twenty-four plus years here with warm appreciation for all the goodwill each of you has shown to me despite the occasionally contentious nature of our work. I can truly say our nation is blessed by having a Supreme Court with such gifted, intelligent, and hardworking members. The process followed here works remarkably well.

I will always cherish the opportunity to have served on the Court with each of you.

Sincerely,
Sandra