

RETIREMENT OF JUSTICE SOUTER

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2009

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:

And now we note with sadness that this is the last session in which our friend and colleague, Justice David Souter, will be on the Bench with us. He has served on this Court faithfully and with great distinction since October 1990. We wish him the best in his well-deserved retirement. On this occasion, we have sent Justice Souter a letter that I will now read. It's dated today.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHAMBERS OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE,
Washington, D. C., June 29, 2009.

Dear David:

We have all felt a profound sense of loss since the announcement of your decision to retire. For nearly twenty years, the Court has had the benefit of your wisdom, civility, and dedication to the cause of justice. Your keen intellect and broad knowledge have enlarged our deliberations and enriched the Court's jurisprudence.

We deeply value the times we have shared in judicial service. We understand your desire to trade white marble for

White Mountains, and return to your land “of easy wind and downy flake.” Though you will not be among us in our daily labors, we are grateful that the privilege of your sturdy friendship will endure long beyond your departure from the bench and tables we have shared.

Affectionately,
JOHN G. ROBERTS, JR.
JOHN PAUL STEVENS
ANTONIN SCALIA
ANTHONY M. KENNEDY
CLARENCE THOMAS
RUTH BADER GINSBURG
STEPHEN BREYER
SAMUEL A. ALITO, JR.
SANDRA DAY O’CONNOR

JUSTICE SOUTER said: I’ve written the following reply.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHAMBERS OF DAVID H. SOUTER,
Washington, D. C., June 29, 2009.

Dear Colleagues,

Your generous letter has touched me more than I can say, and I will only try to leave you with some sense of what our common service has meant to me. You quoted the Poet, and I will, too, in words that set out the ideal of the life engaged, “. . . where love and need are one. . . .”

That phrase accounts for the finest moments of my life on this Court, as we have agreed or contended with each other over those things that matter to decent people in a civil society. For nineteen Terms, I have lived that life with you, all of us sharing our own best years with one another, working side by side as fellow servants and as friends.

I will not sit with you at our bench again after the Court rises for the Summer this time, but neither will I retire from our friendship, which has held us together despite the pull of

the most passionate dissent. It has made the work lighter through all my tenure here, and for as long as I live, I will be thankful for it, and be under a very grateful obligation to each one of you.

Yours affectionately,
David