

Law Day 2014 Opening Remarks

Thank you, Judge Ginocchio. Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Litchfield County Bar Association's 2014 Law Day celebration. My name is Ruth Nadeau Dwyer and on behalf of the LCBA, we'd like to thank all of you for coming today. In 1958, President Eisenhower proclaimed the first Law Day as a "day of national dedication to the principle of government under the law." Each year since then, Law Day programs are held nationwide to celebrate and discuss how our legal system strives to achieve justice. Each year brings us a theme of particular relevance. This year's is "American Democracy and the Rule of Law: Why Every Vote Matters."

This theme gives us an opportunity to focus on the importance of the right to vote as the foundation of our representative democracy. The legitimacy of the rule of law is reinforced and cemented when citizens are able to vote and participate in free elections. This Law Day falls on the eve of the 50th anniversaries of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Great strides have been made since then, but there is still work left to do. In the words of American Bar Association President James Silknet: "This [year's] theme highlights the importance of voting and ensuring that our nation's election laws and practices permit the broadest, least restrictive access to the ballot box. When an eligible voter is deprived of the opportunity to cast a ballot, the harm is not only to that voter, but also to our government, which becomes that much less representative of the people. In a nation governed by democratic principles, every vote is vital."

It is with this in mind that we focus our Law Day on highlighting the importance of the judicial system in advocating for and ensuring the right to vote. Today, we will present the Liberty Bell Award to Dritan Mersini, who works as an office Clerk at G.A. #18 in Bantam. We will also take time to acknowledge and recognize all of the attorneys who have served our community in a pro bono or reduced fee capacity, ensuring that those who would otherwise be facing the legal system on their own are represented in court. We will remember a member of the LCBA that we lost over the past year. Judge John W. Pickard will be pulling double duty today by presenting the annual Judge's Address on our Law Day theme as well as honoring those LCBA members who have practiced law for 50 years or more. And lastly, we will be awarding an LCBA scholarship in memory of Thomas Wall, Sr. and Catherine Roraback to Meghan McCoy, a law student at Roger Williams University School of Law who grew up here in Litchfield County.

We will begin, however, with a treat. We have a new LCBA member, Attorney David Moore. He is a general practitioner in Avon with an emphasis in mediation and ADR and is a trained collaborative family law attorney. Aside from being a lawyer and mediator, he has another talent: Singing! In fact, he has even sung the national anthem at Fenway Park! While this venue is admittedly a bit smaller, he has graciously agreed to sing the Star Spangled Banner here for us today. So without further adieu, I'd like to bring him up here and ask everyone to rise for the singing of our National Anthem.