

Dedication Remarks by Mayor Paul Dyster
Niagara Falls Public Safety Building, June 17, 2009

In our society, we have a tradition of using grand architecture for our public buildings—our schools, courts, government offices, and so forth. It is a tradition we have inherited from our Roman forebearers, from whom we also have inherited the precious concept of the rule of law.

When we think of the accomplishments of the Romans, we often think of their great public works like the aqueducts and the Coliseum, of their cultural and scientific achievements, or of their military conquests. But perhaps their greatest accomplishment as a civilization was that they found a chaotic world, ruled by brute force and barbarism, and transformed it into an orderly one, ruled by law.

To remind their citizens of the importance of the rule of law, the Romans invested in public buildings, and paid a great deal of attention to their design and construction. They viewed them as symbols of the permanence of their civilization and institutions, the power of their state, and the pride they had in these things as citizens.

That is a tradition I think it is particularly important to honor at this time and place in our history, when so many people, with so much apparent justification in the daily headlines, are growing increasingly pessimistic about the future of our political institutions. Pessimism about the future is a distinctly un-American attitude, for if any principle has guided us throughout our political life, it is the principle that we Americans are the good guys, and of course the good guys are always going to win in the end. So we Americans have been generally optimistic about the future even when history has presented us with great challenges. In fact, it is at precisely these moments of crisis and doubt, when all seemed lost, that the optimism of our ancestors came to the fore to save the day.

Today, by gathering here to dedicate this great public building, we as a community are sending a message to those who may have lost faith in the future of America and its institutions.

So...

If you are a violent criminal that thinks you are going to take control of our streets and drive our citizens cowering into their living rooms—guess again. We're not going to let that happen.

If you are a drug dealer who is making a profit selling out the future of our young people, watch out. Even if you work for the City of Niagara Falls. Even if you're a cop. If you think you're above the law, guess again. We're going to arrest you.

If you are a gang member who thinks that you can make your own rules to live by and ignore the ones that we as a society have set for ourselves, guess again. We're going to round you up, and take you off the street.

If you are a bigot and you think you can use the workplace as a vehicle for discrimination,

harassment or retaliation based on the race, creed, or color of your co-workers, guess again. We're not going to tolerate that.

If you are a crooked businessman who cheats our elderly citizens out of their retirement money, or a crooked accountant who cooks the books for personal gain, or a crooked bureaucrat who looks the other way in return for "certain considerations," or a crooked politician who sells the public trust to the highest bidder, and you think that because you wear a suit and tie that you are above the law, guess again. You're going to get caught. The good guys are going to win in the end.

In a sense, we built this building to show that the rule of law is here to stay, that law and order will always triumph in the end, and that in spite of knowing that we have some bad people living among us, the vast majority of us have pride in our government and all that it stands for.

So...

If you're one of the thousands of honest citizens of the City of Niagara Falls who get up every morning and go to work, doing an honest day's work for an honest day's pay...

And you pay your fair share of taxes (with only the usual amount of grumbling), and respect your neighbor regardless of race, creed or color, and teach your children to do the same...

And you give of your time and energy to help make the community you live in a better place, whether by working with a block club, or coaching in the Little League, or helping out at your church or your neighborhood school...

And you respect and obey the law, because you understand the blood that has been shed on battlefields around the world to ensure that we Americans will always have the precious right to craft the laws under which we all live...

then we're sending a message to you, too. This magnificent building is the house that YOU built. If it is a palace, then by the grace of God let it be the people's palace. Let it stand for a hundred years as a living symbol that government of the people, by the people and for the people has not and will not perish from the earth.

Rather, because of you the citizen, because of your abiding faith in our laws and institutions, your sacrifices, your commitment, and your eternal vigilance, our Constitution, our Bill of Rights, our democratic values, our cherished American way of life, our laws, will endure long after even this magnificent structure has been reduced to rubble by the passage of time.

There were many people who believed that this building could not be built, or at least that its' construction would inevitably devolve into a fiasco of delays, work stoppages and cost overruns, and in the end prove that nothing much has changed in the City of Niagara Falls. Well, guess again. The good guys won in the end. We got the job done on time and under budget. On behalf of all the citizens of the City of Niagara Falls, I offer thanks to the many workers whose hands touched this great work, from the ironworkers and carpenters and electricians to the

citizen volunteers to the engineers, architects and developers and... yes, even the lawyers. For each of you in your own way has left your imprint upon this project.

I ask our eternal father to watch over the judges and police officers who work here. I ask him to bless them with a hard heart in dealing with the evil-doers among us, but with a sense of justice and compassion in dealing with those who may have temporarily lost their way. I ask him to soften the hearts and reawaken the human spirit of those that find themselves incarcerated here, that they might find their way back to the straight and narrow path from which they have strayed.

I ask our lord to remind us each time we pass this magnificent building that we are a nation ruled by laws, not by men. I ask his blessing upon all our elected officials, but especially our Governor David Paterson and our President Barrack Obama. Lord, bless these good men with courage and wisdom as they stand for the rule of law in a world fraught with chaos and corruption, and keep them healthy and safe.

Finally, I ask God's blessing upon all the citizens of the City of Niagara Falls, that in their shared accomplishment of erecting this fine building, they will find a cause for new confidence in themselves and new optimism about their future. No doubt many great trials and tribulations lie ahead of us, but having successfully overcome this once apparently insurmountable challenge should give us all renewed faith that, yes, in the end, the good will prevail.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure at this time to introduce to you the Honorable Judge Jonathan Lippman, Chief Judge of the State of New York and Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. Judge Lippman was appointed to his position by Governor Paterson in January and confirmed by the New York State Senate in February. From 1996 to May of 2007, he served as Chief Administrative Judge of all New York State Courts, overseeing a \$2.5 billion budget and over 16,000 employees in over 350 locations. In that capacity he was instrumental in the introduction of many far-reaching reforms, including establishment of problem-solving community courts, drug courts and domestic violence courts; opening of Family Court to the public; extensive reform of the jury system and many other accomplishments.

Chief Judge Lippman is a current member of the Conference of Chief Justices, and a former President of the Conference of State Court Administrators, which is dedicated to the improvement of state court systems nationwide.

A product of the New York City public school system, Chief Judge Lippman received his BA from New York University in 1965, graduating Phi Beta Kappa and cum laude, with a major in Government and International Relations. He received his JD from New York University School of Law in 1968, the same year he was admitted to the New York bar. He lives in Manhattan with his wife Amy; they have two children.

Please give a warm Western New York welcome to Chief Judge of the State of New York the Honorable Jonathan Lippman.