

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to let you know that, after almost eleven years as Chief Justice, I have decided to retire from the bench effective February 5, 2018. When I began in this position in 2007, I told my family and close friends that I thought ten years in a position of leadership was just about right. I continue to believe that and, therefore, have decided to move on to new tasks before I overstay my welcome.

I have given a lot of thought to what I would like to say to each of you and, frankly, the words do not adequately convey my appreciation for all of your efforts and professionalism over the last decade.

With regard to your responsibilities as jurists, you have had to deal with significant ongoing budgetary restrictions that have resulted in far less staff support. There has also been a major move away from the traditional adjudicatory system of lawyer representation to an influx of self-represented litigants over the last decade. I have had the privilege of reviewing many of your contested decisions over that time period and it is abundantly clear to me that, despite fewer resources, the quality of your work and your efforts to achieve justice for the people who appear before you, whether they are represented or not, has not been hampered at all by these trends.

Many of you also took on major committee responsibilities, all of which I cannot name here. As you well know, these were not pro forma committees. Your hard work included implementation of the strategic plans that resulted in so many changes, both large and small, to how the Branch does business. Your efforts, in conjunction with Branch staff, have dramatically improved access to justice and delivery of services to the public. You also helped develop recommendations and then implement major reform in how we conduct business in civil and family matters. These changes have resulted in a more cost-effective system for the parties without sacrificing our responsibility to decide cases in a fair and efficient manner. Additionally, you have seamlessly incorporated 16 and 17 year olds into the juvenile justice system. Finally, your willingness to mentor your colleagues and your work on the Judicial Ethics Committee and the Judicial Media Committee have all increased public trust and confidence in the Branch because they have provided a place where judges can help to resolve issues before they become larger problems.

I said from the beginning of my tenure that I was fully in favor of openness and transparency because the Branch not only had nothing to hide but also because it should be extremely proud of the work all of you do every day for the public. I am even more convinced of this as I step down. As I move to the next phase of my career, I wish each of you only the best.

Sincerely,
Chase