STATE OF WISCONSIN
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In the 165-year history of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, only 77 individuals have had the opportunity and honor to serve the people of this state on the high court. I have been one of them—and, not incidentally, the first woman, thanks to the appointment by Governor Patrick J. Lucey. Since then, I have been elected and re-elected four times with never less than 55 percent, and once 65 percent, of the popular vote. That is relevant because my fourth elected term concludes 14 months from now, and it is necessary for me to decide once again whether to seek re-election, this time in the April 2019 non-partisan election. It is a difficult decision. But in that regard, it is like many of the decisions in cases I have helped decide over four decades on the court—most often, good arguments on both sides, difficult choices, important questions.

For a variety of reasons, I have decided not to seek re-election. It is the right decision for me. More importantly, it is the right decision for the state. I will encourage qualified candidates to seek election and to do so in a way that honors the independent and non-partisan tradition of the judicial branch in Wisconsin—though that tradition has been tested too often.

My first term began on August 6, 1976. In 1996, the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court administered the oath as I became Wisconsin's Chief Justice. Ten years later, friends, family and a large gathering at the State Capitol attended the anniversary celebration of my 50 years as a member of the bar, 30 years on the bench and 10 years as Chief Justice. I intend that my last day on the court will be July 31, 2019. Until then, and as I have done for my entire judicial career, I will continue to express my point of view. I will do so on the bench. And, if principles and values integral to the great state of Wisconsin and its courts continue to be challenged, I will also express my views off the bench, if necessary and as appropriate.

When I joined the court, I was given a voice—a voice that I have not hesitated to use. The best expression of appreciation I can give the people who have elected and repeatedly re-elected me is to continue to speak with the clarity, forthrightness and compassion that come from a life I have tried to devote to service and to justice for all.

Shirley S. Abrahamson