

Thank you Dean Worthan. And thank you to the Law School and the Law Society. I am honored and humbled to be associated with Rex Lee and the previous nominees.

Rex Lee has long been an inspiration to me, both professionally and personally. He was the Solicitor General when I was in law school – the first time I became aware of the office and its responsibilities. When I went on to clerk for Justice White, for whom Rex Lee also clerked, I had the opportunity not only to observe him at oral argument, but also to learn of the high regard in which he was held by the Court. At our clerks' reunions, he was one of the few who did not confine himself to those of his own age and status. I recall a conversation a few of us had with him in the early '90s about the biggest mistakes he thought he had made as a Supreme Court advocate. That such a big man would be so open to young lawyers struck me as remarkable.

As the careers of Rex Lee and the prior recipients demonstrate, we lawyers are very fortunate, because we have so many opportunities for public service. There is no greater privilege, in my mind, than standing up in the Supreme Court on behalf of the United States. But there are many other ways to serve as well. Law firms, like my former firm Jones Day, provide lots of pro bono opportunities – including ones that don't involve having to go to court or write a brief.

My current career path grew out of my church's work with young people and families in an inner-city area of the District. As I learned of the difficulties that poor people encounter in their contacts with landlords, government agencies, and the local courts, I began to think about how I could use my skills as an appellate lawyer to their benefit. Happily, the Legal Aid Society was thinking along the same lines: to start an appellate project with the goal of shaping the law in D.C. affecting people in poverty.

This required for both of us – and especially Legal Aid – somewhat of a leap of faith. I would have to be able to identify the sorts of cases that could take to the local court of appeals. I would need to be able to relate to a very different client community – real people facing many life challenges, only one of which we might be able to address. I would need to be able to prepare a brief without a paralegal.

It has all worked out surprisingly well. We have had some significant victories – expanding fair housing rights, protecting women from abuse, and correcting some practices of the local administrative court. But we do not win them all.

Finally, I am overwhelmed with gratitude – for this award and for the many friends, mentors, and colleagues who have joined us today. And, most of all, for my husband, Jerry Hartman, a constant source of laughter, love, and inspiration.