

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

Volume 158, No. 161

## Justices teach professionalism

Incoming law students learn about the importance of civility in lives and careers

BY JERRY CRIMMINS  
Law Bulletin staff writer

The concept of professionalism includes lawyers willing to stand up and do the right thing when it may not be the popular thing, Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride told new law students Wednesday night.

Justices of the state Supreme Court and appellate court will introduce new law students throughout Illinois to the concept of professionalism in programs that will run through October.

The talks Wednesday at Northern Illinois University College of Law and The John Marshall Law School — and further events to come at the state's seven other law schools — are organized by the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism.

Kilbride said he gave Northern Illinois law students the example of longtime Chicago lawyer and retired federal judge George N. Leighton who was indicted for "giving an African-American couple legal advice" that they could move into an apartment in segregated Cicero.

This led to a riot in 1951. Leighton was indicted for inciting that riot.

Albert E. Jenner and Thurgood Marshall "stepped up to represent him," Kilbride said he told the students. The charges were dropped.

Kilbride said he also told the students about an Aug. 7 story in the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin on Morris Dees, founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, and "how he decided to use his law career to effect change in what he believes is in the best



The incoming class of 114 students at Northern Illinois University College of Law took "The Pledge of Professionalism" Wednesday, administered by Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride.

interest of this nation, striving for racial harmony."

Student Shantae Stevenson, 36, from Maywood, said today, "I was actually quite impressed that the chief justice of the Supreme Court came to welcome me personally and my class in general into the law profession."

Kilbride led the new students in the "Pledge of Professionalism," in which each student says in part:

"I commit myself to service without prejudice, integrity without compromise and the diligent performance of my duties with the utmost good faith."

"They were inspired," said Northern Illinois University College of Law Dean Jennifer L. Rosato said of the 114 new students. "They related to what he was saying about the importance of being an effective lawyer, a nice lawyer, a lawyer that helps those in need."

Appellate Justice Kathryn E. Zenoff spoke to the 50 new

evening students at John Marshall on Wednesday.

She said she told them professionalism "included treating everyone they come in contact with not only after law school, but during law school, with dignity" and "that I thought integrity should guide their ambition and not the other way around."

Zenoff told the students "that their reputation is their most important asset" and "to keep a sense of humor as it helps put not only the law, but life in perspective."

Zenoff advised the students to focus on civility and professionalism starting in law school "as it takes practice to develop those traits, and that civility is not inconsistent with advocacy."

The justice described how she led "a community-wide task force on the development of a mental health court in our community in Rockford."

Student LaQuenta Rudison, 28, from Chicago's Bronzeville neigh-

borhood, said that struck home for her. Rudison said she had seen a number of people get arrested where she grew up and she knew some had mental problems.

"Obviously they should be treated differently because they are different," Rudison said.

Zenoff said she met a new student at John Marshall who said his work at the Cook County Mental Health Court led him to law school.

John Marshall has 360 entering students, said Clifford H. Scott-Rudnick, director of continuing education and professionalism at the school. The rest planned to hear Appellate Justice P. Scott Neville Jr. speak Thursday.

Kilbride said Supreme Court Justice Robert R. Thomas gave the court's first law school lecture on professionalism in 2003 at Northern Illinois. The court's Commission on Professionalism was created in 2005 at Thomas' recommendation.