

Tribute to

JUSTICE KATHRYN MICKLE WERDEGAR

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Like so many of my colleagues, it's hard to imagine that this day has come. I think we were all surprised, me no less than any of the others. And a little bit saddened to hear that Justice Werdegar had decided to retire, as happy as we are for her that she will get to enjoy this next chapter of her life.

This is a very bittersweet day for this court. It's bittersweet because, for all of the reasons you've heard, Justice Werdegar has been an icon of California law. She has had a remarkable career in public service. She's been a pioneer, and she has served as an inspiration for countless aspiring lawyers who have been lucky enough to follow in her path. She has left an indelible mark on the law of this state. It is truly impossible to imagine what it is like to serve on this court without her.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting her alma mater at the law school formerly known as Boalt Hall, where all the students sitting around a dinner table asked, "What is it like to work with Justice Werdegar?" She is an icon.

* Associate Justice, California Supreme Court. Adapted from remarks delivered at Justice Werdegar's final Supreme Court oral argument sessions — in San Francisco, May 30, 2017, and Los Angeles, June 6, 2017 — and the Retirement Celebration at the Supreme Court in San Francisco, August 2, 2017.

The truth of the matter is that it is a remarkable experience for us, too. But, as much of an icon and inspiration as she has been for generations of men and women who have aspired to careers in the law, you would never know it from sitting around the conference table with her, or sitting at her coffee table in her office and talking to her about the law because the one thing that you can say reliably about Justice Werdegar is that she, despite her profound scholarship, her diligence, her probing insight, is, above all else, warm and unassuming and unfailingly gracious and welcoming to each and every one of her colleagues.

As much as anyone else on the court, she is responsible for creating an atmosphere of collaboration and of working hard to get the answers right, to do our best to serve the people of California with that same graciousness and diligence and unflinching probity. She sets an example through a mode of unassuming but firm leadership that demonstrates an unflinching commitment to the spirit of collegiality that makes this court such a remarkable institution, to the integrity of its decision-making, to principles of justice, and to the rule of law.

It has been an enormous privilege to get to serve with Kay Werdegar on the California Supreme Court for the last few years, and I will miss her deeply. My only regret is that we couldn't have served together longer. We are all, Californians and colleagues alike, very much in Justice Werdegar's debt. Kay has performed a remarkable service for the court and for the people of California, for which we will all be grateful. It is a sad day for those of us who've had the pleasure to serve with her, but we take comfort in knowing that we have been fast friends and will continue to be friends for many years to come. Congratulations, Kay, and best wishes for all your future endeavors.

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