

President Ramo: One of the traditions of The American Law Institute for many, many, many years has been to invite the President of the American Bar Association to come and speak. I had that honor many years ago, and it is a particular hon-or and I think important today for me to introduce the current American Bar Association President, Linda Klein from Atlanta.

Linda is the senior managing shareholder at Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, and she has received every accolade that one could receive in Georgia. Everyone knows that she is a first-rate lawyer, and she has been a magnificent President of the ABA.

But I want to talk about two things in particular that she has undertaken that are so deeply important. First, one of the initiatives that Linda has paid so much attention to and really brought to the forefront, until she spoke about this, I did not appreciate myself the difficulty that American veterans had in finding legal services.

And that is almost beyond understanding that we would send people out to risk their lives for us, live in horrendous conditions, and then when they had legal problems, after they had come home and were veterans, not attend to them.

Linda is the person who, I think, both realized this and, importantly, didn't just say, "Oh, that's a terrible thing," but actually tried to do something about it.

Secondly, we have this very much in common. I spent the entire year that I was President of the American Bar Association trying to keep the Congress from killing the Legal Services Corporation. We have among us now, as a new member, John Levi, who is the chair of the board of the national Legal Services Corporation.

And Linda, I am both grateful and sad—sad because you'd think we wouldn't have to be fighting the fight, and grateful because she is now fighting to preserve what I think must be a basic American right. And that is the right to legal services no matter what your status in life.

So it is an honor for me to welcome and say thank you to the President of the ABA, Linda Klein. (*Applause*)

President Linda A. Klein: Good afternoon, and thank you, Madam President. I might not be here if it weren't for you today. So I thank you so much for being the trailblazer rock star that you are.

And thank you all for including me on the agenda. As a proud member of ALI and in my role as ABA President, I know how proud we are of the longstanding relationship between the ABA and the ALI. It's reflected in the many member leaders that we have in common.

I see some other past Presidents of the ABA out there, at least William Hubbard and Carolyn Lamm are there, sitting next to each other. Maybe there's something about that we should talk about.

But all the issues that we work on and the concerns that we share, and of course, the ALI's representation on the ABA House of Delegates, which is currently filled by the incomparable Judy Miller, whom I saw somewhere out there. There she is.

And of course, Roberta, you're a mutual treasure. I don't know how else to describe. You're a mutual treasure for both organizations, and we're so grateful for all of your service to justice and the profession.

And we're also looking forward to working with President Designate Levi, who recently provided outstanding leadership as chair of the ABA's Standing Committee on the American Judicial System.

Well, everyone warned me, before I became ABA President last August, expect the unexpected. Keep the decks clear for some unforeseen issues and crises, and I understand that Chesterfield Smith received that advice before he served as President of the ABA, 1973–1974, just as Watergate was unfolding.

The same advice went to my friend Bob Hirshon before he accepted the presidential gavel a month before 9/11. And it's also what colleagues advised Mike Greco before he became President a few weeks before Hurricane Katrina.

In these instances and plenty more, the ABA and our member volunteers rose to the occasion, not just in the moment, but in the weeks and months and years following. We did so through our post-Watergate renaissance of professional ethics and through our expertise to help calibrate the proper and complex balances between law and national security in the post-PATRIOT Act America. And through our attention, after witnessing the destruction of the Gulf Coast, to disaster preparedness as a critical element of legal competence and compliance. And of course, we worked tirelessly to deliver pro bono legal services to the disaster victims.

But today is our moment. And to guide us, we know what defines us as lawyers. A commitment to the rule of law, fealty to due process, and our work to ensure access to justice. And with these foundations, our country has weathered every crisis—civil war, world wars, economic depressions, and social unrest. And we will continue to do so.

For a nation based on the rule of law, nothing is more important than the impartiality and integrity of our courts. We reject personal attacks on judges, and it is critical that our judiciary remain independent and free from political pressure. (*Applause*)

Many bar leaders have shared with me that not everyone understands why an independent judiciary is critical and what's at stake. And the ABA has long worked with state bars and local bars and other bar associations to support efforts to defend judges against unfair attacks.

And thanks to the hard work of our Standing Committee on the American Judicial System, we've drawn on this support and we've created an online presentation for the public and the media that explains the role of judges and the value of an independent judiciary. It's at ambar, like American Bar—a-m-b-a-r—ambar.org/protectourjudiciary.

And feel free to share that with community organizations and the media. And we're going to continue to speak out, and we're going to continue to educate the public on this very important issue.

The rule of law also depends on a competent judiciary. The ABA's independent Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary conducts extensive peer reviews of each nominee's integrity, professional competence, and judicial temperament. The committee does not consider a nominee's philosophy, political affiliation, or ideology.

And over the years, leaders of both political parties have credited our evaluations for their thoroughness and their sole focus on professional qualifications. While the White House has elected not to use the ABA's vetting services for prospective nominees before their names are released publicly, the only effect this decision has had is that the administration will not have the benefit of our ratings in advance of the nomination.

But what hasn't changed and will not change is the same diligent review of every federal-court nominee, as the ABA has done since the Eisenhower Administration, so that the Senate has all the information it needs to make informed decisions on these lifetime appointments. (*Applause*)

We're insisting on the rule of law and access to justice in many other ways. Our task force on confidence in the police system has a report that's encouraging community education and dialogue to educate the public and law enforcement to bridge that gap of understanding. Both sides need to regain trust in the other, and you can find this report and the ways to get involved at ambar.org/publictrust.

Due process was central to this year's theme of Law Day, and that's the ABA flagship annual-event outreach effort that we do every May. And our theme was the Fourteenth Amendment.

Everyone seems to know something about the First Amendment, the Second Amendment, maybe the Fifth Amendment. But on this 150th anniversary

sary of the ratification process of the Fourteenth Amendment, we want to underscore how central the amendment is in our daily lives.

Hundreds of bar associations, courts, and schools and community groups sponsored Law Day events about the Fourteenth Amendment. We had a terrific panel discussion in Washington on Law Day, May 1, moderated by Professor Jeffrey Rosen of the National Constitution Center.

And it was so fabulous, we did a video of it, and if you'd like to take a look at the video, it's online at lawday.org. Can't forget lawday.org.

President Trump, Chief Justice Roberts, and 35 governors issued Law Day proclamations. Public education celebrating the rule of law is more important than ever, and so I'm grateful to all of those who planned Law Day events, and especially my dear friend Stephanie Parker, who was our National Law Day chair, and I know she's coming on the board here.

I mentioned earlier what defines us as lawyers—rule of law, due process, access to justice. And every year, we fight hard to ensure that the Legal Services Corporation has enough funding to help ordinary Americans. Roberta mentioned that, for sure.

And every year, though, it's a struggle. But this year, with the administration's zeroing out funding for the Legal Services Corporation, it's literally the fight for the agency's very existence. It's all hands on deck.

And saving the Legal Services Corporation is absolutely a bipartisan fight, and we battle that together. So I'm asking everyone here to please lend your name by going to defendlegalaid.org. Fill out a simple form. That form will print at the ABA's headquarters here in Washington, and we're going to deliver that form to your two Senators and your representative in the House.

Through our campaign at defendlegalaid.org, we delivered more than 20,000 cards to elected representatives, encouraging proper funding for the Legal Services Corporation. Some of you have your cell phones out now. You won't offend me. You can do it right now, defendlegalaid.org.

During our annual ABA Day in Washington last month, we had a record turnout of lawyers from every state, all 50 states, more than 350 lawyers who came to meet with their congressional delegations to advocate for funding of the Legal Services Corporation. Our fight has just begun. So please reach out, educate your members of Congress on this issue.

Again, defendlegalaid.org. It only takes a few minutes. It's a great way to get started. And tell all of your friends—they don't have to be lawyers—to fill out the same form.

Roberta mentioned that among the major recipients of legal aid are military veterans. Many bar associations and law schools and legal-aid groups do so much to ensure justice for those who have served our country and risked their lives to defend the rule of law and the liberties we enjoy. Because without them, there would be no rule of law.

And many of our nation's 22 million veterans face a maze of legal problems—employment and family matters, evictions, wrongful denial of benefits, and sadly, involvement in the criminal-justice system and homelessness. At least half of the top problems leading to homelessness among veterans are legal problems.

And the ABA's Veterans Legal Services Initiative that we launched this year is inspired by the great work that many legal groups are doing and the great deal more that we all can do. We're promoting more pro bono legal assistance for veterans, more clinics, more legal-services coordination across jurisdictions, and more awareness for the special legal needs that veterans face.

Like legal aid, funding this is a very bipartisan issue that unites us as Americans, and your firm or organization can certainly get involved, and we welcome that. Let me know.

Lawyers are always relevant. We always make a difference. But sometimes our role gets more overlooked or taken for granted than at other times. As developments change daily, it's not always practical, smart, or even strategic to react on a dime. But it's clearer than ever that lawyers—armed with a commitment to the rule of law, due process, and access to justice—are, and always will be, what makes American democracy the envy of the world.

We witnessed this when hundreds of lawyers nationwide flocked to airports to represent new arrivals. We saw this at Law Day events, at congressional constituent meetings during ABA Day, at legal clinics helping those in need. We see this throughout the ABA in the hard work of our 3300 committees and other groups.

And it's happening here through the critical work of ALI. Ours are the rooms where it happens.

So thank you not only for serving our profession, but for serving our country. You ensure that our profession is equipped to maintain the rule of the law and the democratic freedoms all Americans enjoy. To show our relevancy to our profession and the public, to hold power accountable, to insist on fundamental respect for our laws and the people they protect—this is the oath we took as lawyers, and we will deliver on that promise.

I hope to see all of you at the ABA Annual Meeting in New York City this August, where our work and our commitment to a just society will be on display for the nation and the world to see.

Thank you very much. (*Applause*)