

Remarks by Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor
As delivered to the Institute for the Advancement of the American
Legal System
Rebuilding Justice Award Dinner
April 19, 2018

Thank you, **Justice Kourlis**, for those kind words and for that wonderful video tribute we saw earlier in the program. It is wonderful to be here with Chief Justices Nathan Hecht, Chase Rogers, Tom Balmer, & Scott Bales as well as the members of the board of the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS).

As president of the Conference of Chief Justices, it is my honor to accept this award and to express our organization's gratitude for your recognition of our work to improve our justice system. I also want to recognize the work that IAALS is doing. Finding answers to some of the justices system's most pressing problems requires all of us to engage and work together. The alliance that has formed in many areas between IAALS and the National Center for State Courts is an example of successful collaboration.

The name of this award, *Rebuilding Justice*, fits perfectly with some news I'd like to share. , I'll start with the good news. The National Center for State

Courts recently released its annual survey on the “State of the State Courts,” and it shows that the courts remain the most trusted branch of state government. A whopping 71 percent of the respondents have confidence in their courts, compared with 61 percent in their governors and 57 percent in their state lawmakers. As we continue to try to better serve the public, I think you’ll agree this is more than good news. It’s great news.

But we have work to do. The survey also reports that six out of 10 people believe state court judges are out of touch with community concerns. And 73 percent said delivering access to justice in rural courts is a problem.

The Conference of Chief Justices is committed to inspiring trust in our courts by addressing some of the most pressing issues that threaten to overwhelm our justice system. To that end, I’ll briefly mention a few things that have our attention:

- CCJ will not stand by and do nothing as countless people are sent to jail because they cannot afford to pay the fines, fees and bail imposed upon them. A national task force, co-formed by CCJ and the Conference of State Court Administrators, is working to find

ways to solve this problem. With the help of state lawmakers and other leaders, we will solve it.

- Another CCJ-COSCA task force – the National Judicial Opioid Task Force – is also hard at work to find solutions, examine current efforts and make recommendations to address the opioid epidemic’s ongoing impact on our justice system. Tens of thousands of families and hundreds of thousands of children are counting on our nation’s leaders to help. And CCJ has pledged to make a difference.
- Our nation’s civil and family courts also deserve our attention. The Civil Justice Initiative and the Family Justice Initiative are developing tools to improve the way these courts operate. Both initiatives have our full support, and CCJ is excited to see how this work improves efficiencies in the courts.

As **Justice Kourlis** said, the *Rebuilding Justice Award* recognizes individuals and organizations that work toward a legal system that is accessible, fair, reliable, efficient and accountable. And we, at CCJ, are honored that you have recognized our work toward doing just that. We are humbled to realize that CCJ is now on a list of award recipients that includes U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor – no relation

😊 – and my former colleague on the Ohio Supreme Court, Thomas J.

Moyer, who won this award in 2010.

As president of CCJ, I feel confident saying that CCJ is in this for the long haul. Ten years from now, 20 years from now, 100 years from now, we will be doing all we can to address the justice system's most pressing issues.

Again, thank you again for this wonderful honor, and thank you for your time. Good night!