

State of the Judiciary
Chief Justice Michael A. Cherry, Nevada Supreme Court
Message to the Legislature
March 8, 2017

Governor Sandoval, Lieutenant Governor Hutchison, constitutional officers, Leader Ford, Speaker Frierson, Senator Roberson, Assemblyman Anderson, distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen, my son David, dear Cheryl, here we go. The state of the Nevada Judiciary is strong, professional, and independent.

It is a great honor for this transplant from Missouri, the "Show-Me" state, to stand before you as Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court to deliver this State of the Judiciary address. It is always a privilege for the Nevada Judiciary to join with the leadership of our Executive and Legislative Branches at the Nevada state house. The justices and judges of Nevada renew our pledge as the Judicial Branch to work together for the benefit of every Nevadan.

When I came to Nevada from St. Louis 47 years ago, right out of Washington University Law School, there were 18 district court judges, a 5-member Supreme Court, and no Court of Appeals in our state. Today I am very proud to say that the Nevada Judiciary is composed of a 7-member Supreme Court, a 3-member Court of Appeals, 82 district court judges, some 26 senior judges and justices, and 97 limited jurisdiction judges, which include our justices of the peace and our municipal court judges. I want to tell everybody in this assembly, we could not have grown into this outstanding Judiciary without the backing of the members, past and present, of the Nevada State Legislature. For this vote of confidence, all my colleagues in our Judiciary thank each and every one of you. Furthermore, there exists a mutual respect between the three branches of our state government: the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judiciary. This fantastic working relationship is the envy of our sister states.

Let me now acknowledge and introduce my colleagues who serve with me on the Nevada Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. First of all, we have Michael Douglas, who will be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 2018. He is very active in the Access to Justice [Commission] and also was, of course, the first African-American Chief Justice. James Hardesty, who has done everything; you have seen him time and time again, and you are going to see him some more: the Guardianship Commission [Commission to Study the Administration of Guardianships in Nevada's Courts]; the pretrial release program; and many other functions, some of which I will cover in my address. Ron Parraguirre, my Basque cowboy poet, is my go-to guy whenever I need something. He assists me with the Supreme Court's Settlement Program so that we can resolve some cases without litigation and further appellate work. Unfortunately, Mark Gibbons is not here today. He is in Las Vegas as is Jerry Tao, who is in the Court of Appeals. I am going to skip you, Kris, and I am going to skip you, Lidia and Abbi; I am going to come back to you. And also we have Michael Gibbons, brother of Mark Gibbons. In his own right, he was the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, the inaugural Court of Appeals. He served Douglas County as the district attorney, was a district judge for a number of years, and now is a member of the Court of Appeals.

Today, March 8, is International Women's Day. I need not tell this assembly about Women's Day. This is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. This day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. And boy, do we have gender parity in the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. My good friend Kris Pickering, a fantastic trial lawyer, with her husband Steve Morris, an expert in civil litigation – and everybody knows my love of the criminal law – a fast learner of criminal law; what a great job she does each and every day for the citizens of Nevada. Lidia Stiglich, the newest member of our Supreme Court, is a former public defender, private practitioner, district court judge in Washoe County, and a tremendous guide for work in the Supreme Court. My good friend Abbi Silver, listen to this resume: district attorney, headed up the SVU. As if that was not enough, she was a municipal court judge, justice of the peace, district court judge, and has now been appointed by me for a four-year term as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. I just want to say this about my counterparts here: what an example to the females, young students, female students, and the whole state of Nevada. What a splendid example of brilliant judges and tremendous achievements by these three jurists. To all the young ladies of our state, I am so proud to call these three my colleagues. They are certainly the dynamic trio of the state of Nevada. Will you three stand and let's give them a round of applause please.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge Elizabeth Brown, the Clerk of the Supreme Court; Harriet Cummings, the Deputy Clerk of the Supreme Court; Tom Harris, the Clerk of the Court of Appeals; Robin Sweet, the State Court Administrator, and her two magnificent Court Administrators, Assistant Court Administrators John McCormick, who is a champion of the rural Nevada, and Rick Stefani, who is the only one who can understand what Senator Mo Denis is saying about IT; Phaedra Kalicki, who is the Supervisor of our Supreme Court Legal Staff; Brandee Mooneyhan, the Reporter of Decisions; and last but not least my judicial assistant, my chamber assistant Jan Luevano, who has been with me for over ten years. But never last and least are the hardworking and loyal employees of the appellate courts and Administrative Office of the Courts. Could you stand as a group and we can acknowledge you.

I worked for the county, I was an alternate municipal judge for over 20 years for the city, and I was in private practice for over 20 years. I had lots of employees over those years that I either supervised or worked with. But I have never seen such a group of dedicated, hardworking, and loyal employees as the folks who work with us in the appellate courts. You guys are great. Thank you so much for everything you do.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank Betsy Gonzales, Chief Judge of the Eighth Judicial District, and Patrick Flanagan, Chief Judge of the Second Judicial District for their commitment and excellence in leadership of the two urban judicial districts. You talk about herding cats. The Eighth has 52 judges and the Second has 15 judges. I would also like to ask any of the members of the Nevada Judiciary in the audience to rise and be acknowledged. Your work for all Nevadans is outstanding.

I also wish to report to you on our appellate court. In total, Nevada, with a population of nearly 3 million people, has seven Supreme Court Justices and three Court of Appeals judges. I want to compare this to two states similar in population, Mississippi and Iowa. Both of these states use the push-down method. The push-down method means that all the cases come to the Supreme Court and then we push down certain cases to the Court of Appeals. Now again, remember what

I said: We have three Court of Appeals judges. Mississippi has nine Supreme Court justices and ten judges on its Court of Appeals. Likewise, the state of Iowa, with a similar population as Nevada and the same push-down model that we have, has a seven-member Supreme Court, nine Court of Appeals judges, and four senior Court of Appeals judges. Now, Nevada still has roughly 1,600 pending cases before our appellate courts. Mississippi has approximately 100, and that is because of the number of Court of Appeals judges that they have assisting the Supreme Court. We're not going to be here this year asking, but I know that Jim Hardesty is going to be around in '19 or '21 to be saying that we need a northern panel of the Court of Appeals, so I just put that in your hat, and keep it.

We are thankful that the Court of Appeals was approved by the Nevadans because it has assisted us in reducing our caseload. Combined, Nevada's appellate courts were able to decrease the pending appellate caseload by 12 percent in 2016, an overall 18 percent decrease from two years ago. But compared to Mississippi, you can see how many more cases could be disposed of if we had additional Court of Appeals judges.

I can tell you we take our responsibility to provide justice very seriously, and we work hard to be innovative. I am proud to say we listen to those who use our services, and we look for ways to provide enhanced access to justice.

Last year I had the privilege of meeting Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan. She said something that epitomizes what we have been doing as the third branch of government: listening and then leading. She said, "[W]hat I've learned most is that no one has a monopoly on truth or wisdom. I've learned that we make progress by listening to each other, across every apparent political or ideological divide."

Listening to concerns and suggestions has led to many improvements in the Judiciary statewide. We have to listen and lead. Nevada's courts see all of society's ills and problems. Not only do we provide resolution to criminal, civil, family, and juvenile matters, we also aid people with substance abuse, mental health issues, housing foreclosures, and family crises. The Nevada Judiciary is on the front lines directly serving Nevadans.

Nevada's Judiciary has a long history of providing exceptional service to the citizens of our state. In fact, following statehood in 1864 when we had three Supreme Court Justices, they traveled the state hearing cases, providing access to justice and considering the needs of our citizens. The traditions established by those Justices 153 years ago continue today as Nevada's Judiciary continues to protect the rights and liberties of individuals, impartially interpreting our laws and disposing of cases in a timely manner.

The fiscal realities of the past few years have required the Supreme Court to utilize new ways to sustain Nevada's third branch of government. Reduced resources have led the Judiciary to discover alternative ways to deliver justice and maintain existing services. I am proud of our careful fiscal stewardship of the people's money.

The complexity of the issues reaching the Supreme Court continues to increase as Nevada matures into a mixture of metropolitan cities, urban counties, and rural regions. Throughout its

history, the Supreme Court has always met the challenge of providing timely resolution of cases to all Nevadans.

The *Nevada Constitution* grants authority to the Chief Justice, as the administrative head of the Nevada court system, to "Recall to active service any retired justice or judge of the court system who consents to such recall and who has not been removed or retired for cause or defeated for retention in office, and may assign him [or her] to appropriate temporary duty within the court system."

Our Senior Justice and Judge Program has proven to be a cost effective way to ensure that court cases can be heard in a timely fashion, even if the assigned judge is unavailable. Nevada is fortunate to have a number of senior justices and judges available whose experience is unmatched and who can step in, no matter what type of case is involved and where the need arises. I am looking forward to the addition of the district judges who are retiring in the future to become senior judges. These men and women will be a great asset to the Judiciary and in the state of Nevada.

The Administrative Office of the Courts assigns senior justices and judges. Requests for assignment direct a specific senior justice or judge to a particular court for several reasons. They may be assigned for a durational amount of time; whenever a judicial vacancy occurs, such as when Stiglich left the bench in Washoe County; or if there is illness, any type of vacancy, mandatory judicial education, or retirement. Senior justices and judges may also hear specific cases due to recusal or disqualification or if a sitting judge has an unusually heavy caseload or congested docket.

The senior justices and judges hear civil and medical malpractice settlement conferences on a regular basis. On average, they hear between three and eight settlement conferences per week. Currently, settlement conferences are heard in the urban Second and Eighth Judicial Districts. Thanks to Jim Hardesty, settlement conferences have been expanded to rural jurisdictions. Additionally, senior justices and judges hear short trials and settlement conferences every two weeks in the Eighth Judicial District Family Court.

Senior justices and judges also conduct specialty court programs in the district courts in the Second, Third, Fifth, Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh [Judicial] Districts. Senior judges and justices conduct the drug and mental health courts in these rural areas. These programs succeed in providing alternatives to jail time for certain offenders and in assisting these offenders to become productive members of society. There are senior justices or judges actively serving the district courts. Their combined efforts provided assistance almost equivalent to six full-time judges for Nevada.

When I ran for the Supreme Court in 2006 when Justice Rose decided to retire, I ran unopposed except for a tough race against None of the Above. When I was elected, my mentor, Justice Mark Gibbons, suggested that our northern panel, which I was the presiding justice of, hold court in the rurals as well as Las Vegas and Reno so that I would get to know and love the entire state. We decided to hold court in various high schools and other venues. We heard actual cases, usually in front of high school government or social studies classes. Needless to say, the lawyers who participated in these cases loved the idea, since most lawyers are frustrated actors, and they

liked the idea of displaying their talents to students. The presiding justice would allow the lawyers to let the audience know the facts of the case before arguments commenced, so that meant that the lawyers could use their entire argument time of 30 minutes arguing the law. When the court appeared at high schools, we would have in attendance not only students, but also local public officials and other dignitaries. After the argument concluded, the panel or full court—sometimes the en banc court would go to high schools or other venues – they would have a Q and A, question and answer session, that included the participating lawyers. When I was the presiding justice, I made them stay. You have to stay and answer questions. The audience would love this portion of the session, although we could not discuss the case that was just argued. We have done these road shows all over the state, including but not limited to Ely, Elko, Panaca, Tonopah, Douglas County, Yerington, Winnemucca, Pahrump, Fallon, Sparks, West Wendover, The National Judicial College, Boyd Law School, and numerous high schools in Las Vegas and Reno. It sounds like a Johnny Cash song. Needless to say, the publicity and good will gained during these road shows was overwhelming and was able to illustrate to the public the dynamics of our Judiciary.

The Access to Justice Commission – Justice Douglas and Justice Hardesty – assists us in providing legal services to everyone in the state. The Commission took on a task last year to develop a consistent set of legal forms for all rural counties. I would like to thank Judge Tod Young of Minden for heading up this effort. With the help of other members of that committee, Judge Young has completed a set of forms that self-represented litigants may use throughout the state. This fits into one of our goals: to support people who cannot afford an attorney so they can still access our courts. Access to Justice is comprised of 22 members from various legal and nonlegal backgrounds. It is one of our largest standing commissions. The goal is to promote equal justice for all Nevadans, regardless of their economic standing. The Commission encourages pro bono services by attorneys. I am pleased to report that 2,177 attorneys provided over 100,000 hours of no-fee, direct legal services to low-income clients. This is an excellent reflection on the high caliber of Nevada's attorneys. We are lucky to be surrounded by professionals who labor to build up our communities. Every December, we have a pro bono luncheon in Las Vegas, and we have lunch with 800 of our best friends. These are the attorneys who supply pro bono services, and we help give out the awards, and it is just a great thing. It is heartwarming to see the attorneys who do this. We are lucky to have the State Bar that we have.

Nevada has a long history of helping its residents get their day in court. This is incredible but in 1879, Nevada became the first state in the nation to authorize the appointment of attorneys in all criminal matters, including misdemeanors, and also provide payment for the attorneys' services. Thanks to the Nevada Legislature and the Nevada Supreme Court, we have a good history on our side. However, we still have work to do.

In our urban counties, a defendant can count on a public defender to provide prompt representation or a contract attorney. However, in the rural parts of our state, indigent defendants may sit in jail for an extended period of time waiting to speak to an attorney while witnesses' memories fade and investigative leads go cold. Even after that defendant is appointed an attorney, he or she may be one of several hundred clients, all vying at the same time for the attention of that single attorney. Nevada's rural attorneys simply cannot shoulder the state's obligations under the Sixth Amendment of the *United States Constitution* any longer. The financial burden increases as the U.S. Supreme Court continually clarifies and expands the

obligations an attorney owes the indigent accused. We must do better at providing representation to rural defendants. Rural persons are just as deserving of representation as their urban neighbors. I encourage you to provide equal justice to rural individuals too. I head up the Indigent Defense Commission in the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Maupin had appointed me in 2007. We established professional standards, and we're looking at caseload standards throughout the state. But now the time has come, ladies and gentlemen of this Legislature, for an independent indigent defense commission. We will be presenting a bill to you to try and establish an independent indigent defense commission.

As I said, Nevada's courts see much of society's ills from the front lines and specialty courts are one area where we have met social needs head on. We are grateful for the Legislature's support in expanding these courts with a special appropriation of \$3 million in new funding, and we hope to get it again. The legislative money from the last session created four new DUI courts in Elko, Las Vegas, Winnemucca, and for those individuals living in Fallon, Yerington, and northern Mineral County. In addition, new drug, habitual offender, and veterans' courts were established in Boulder City, Carson City, East Fork, Henderson, Laughlin, Las Vegas, Mesquite, North Las Vegas, Reno, Sparks, and Winnemucca. This means more people have the chance at breaking the revolving door cycle of addiction and recidivism. Success of specialty courts means one thing—more funds for education. The overarching goal of a specialty court is to support participants to achieve total abstinence from drugs or alcohol. These courts promote responsibility and accountability and teach people how to become productive law-abiding citizens. This, in return, reduces criminal recidivism and provides for better, healthier communities. So, we are addressing a real need, and we appreciate your funding to expand those programs. Expanding specialty courts serves Nevadans, and I encourage you to continue providing support for these programs. We can keep people out of jails, give them a second chance, and improve our communities. Again, success in this area means more funds available for education.

Many of our courts are reaching out to our youth to provide them with support and inspiration. This is a heartwarming story. Just last month, the Las Vegas Youthful Offender Program celebrated its fortieth graduate. It is called the YO Program. This is a problem-solving court for participants between the ages of 18 and 24 who suffer with substance abuse dependency. It is the only court in the nation that requires family members to participate with their adult children in order for the addict to be accepted into the program. The court focuses on making the whole family healthy, not just the addicts who found their way into the criminal justice system. The participants learn how to maintain their sobriety. They are given tools to help them. To graduate, the participants must have a high school diploma or GED, and they must have successfully completed appropriate counseling; be employed; have established healthy, independent living; and have a savings account. Family members, as mandatory participants, learn about enabling and codependency and are armed with knowledge that 'No' can be a complete sentence. Addiction is a family disease, and YO Court's focus is on treating the family. With opioid deaths surpassing automobile accidents for the first time last year, there could be no time more crucial than now for courts like YO Court. I am so proud to say that present today, we have Chief Judge Cedric Kerns of the Las Vegas Municipal Court and his fortieth graduate of the YO Program, Nicholas C.

Last year, at-risk fifth graders in North Las Vegas joined Judge Natalie Tyrrell in celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Kids in the Court program. Judge Tyrrell created the program in 2002 to

educate students about the judicial system, law-related careers, and the importance of staying in school. The court had partnered with C. P. Squires, an at-risk school in North Las Vegas, to help students set new goals for themselves. With programs like this one, the Judiciary is doing much to lend a hand in civics education across the state. You know, not everybody can be successful in drug court or AA or any 12-step program, and thanks to the Governor and his program for opioid abuse and Justice Stiglich, who made a presentation there, judges across the state are now accepting medication-assisted treatment programs such as methadone. I am so proud today to have with us two people who have done so much in the Las Vegas community for those who are using methadone on a regular basis. I have been to some of their programs, and these people stand up and say I couldn't make it in drug court, couldn't make it on probation, but now I have made it on methadone. I have my family together, I have employment, and I haven't been arrested or committed any type of crime. And with me today is the founder of the Adelson methadone clinic, Dr. Miriam Adelson, and the director of that clinic, Dr. Shirley Linzy. Miriam and Shirley, will you please stand, and let's say hello to them. That's some happy news. Now I have a little bit of sad news for you.

While we have been listening to those who use the Judiciary, we heard the frustrations of many Nevadans. For instance, the Commission to Study the Administration of Guardianships in Nevada's Courts spent 16 months listening to the concerns of persons subject to guardianship, experts on reform, guardians, and judges. Some of the testimony was alarming and some of it heartbreaking. Thanks go out to Justice James Hardesty, Judge David Barker, and Judge David Hardy for bringing this matter to our attention. And thanks to many individuals in the Administrative Office of the Courts who assisted in this effort, particularly Stephanie Heying, who assembled the final report. The result of this Commission is a 236-page report with dozens of recommendations for changes in guardianship law, policy, and court rules. This list of recommendations now goes before this assembly, including a bill of rights for individuals subject to guardianship and other protections aimed at reform. To put the focus where it should be, on the protection of the individual, 16 state law and 14 judicial rule changes are proposed. We provide these as suggestions based on our listening to those involved. These recommendations will go a long way to improve Nevada's guardianship system, and we encourage you to support these changes.

Another area where we have listened is the question of how judges handle pretrial release. Frankly, our judges have been setting bail or releasing individuals in the blind. Let me explain. An individual comes to the court on a charge. Bail is set, and too often the person sits in jail waiting for their court date. Our judges do not know if the person is a risk to the community, and too many people have lost their jobs or their homes because they've had to wait in jail. In short, for the poor, bail means jail. Since the middle of 2015, we have been listening to people in the system to examine alternatives and improvements to Nevada's pretrial release system. I am pleased to say that a pilot program has been underway for nearly seven months in Clark, Washoe, and White Pine Counties. Judges are evaluating pretrial release based on evidence-based practices and risk assessment tools, and they are no longer in the dark. The pilot program has shown that risk assessment identifies the higher and lower risk defendants. This is a major reform that eventually may be expanded to all of Nevada. Again, I would like to thank staff from the Administrative Office of the Courts, particularly Jamie Gradick, and Justice Hardesty for chairing the study group. I think they deserve a round of applause.

On a happier note – finally, we took an active role in assisting persons in Clark County using the child welfare system. In conjunction with a mandate from the Supreme Court's Blue Ribbon for Kids Commission, the Eighth and Second Judicial [District] Courts implemented a one judge/one family case assignment model in the abuse and neglect case type. The Commission, chaired by my good friend who has left me-but at least we got Lidia in exchange-Nancy Saitta, who chairs this committee and showcases another example of the Judiciary listening to the concerns of people who work and participate in the child welfare system. This woman is the queen of adoptions and everything that has to do with foster care. And Nancy, what a job you've done. I know even though you retired and you are one of my senior judges and justices, you're still doing kids' work, and I know the Governor has appointed you and his own wife to handle some of these matters. Nancy, stand up and take a bow.

We are one of the few remaining western states to have judges ride a circuit. My good friend Judge Jim Shirley is the type of judge, covering the Eleventh Judicial District Court and traveling between Battle Mountain, Hawthorne, and Lovelock. In fact, he may be one of those people sprinting across our basins and ranges, and hopefully one who does not get tickets.

For long-term vacancies, we use senior judges to provide uninterrupted access to justice. However, sometimes an emergency takes place, keeping a judge from the bench too quickly for a senior judge appointment. So what has Judge Shirley done? He has been talking to Judge Tom Stockard of Fallon, and this will allow each judge to cover for each other in an emergency. It is another example of how our judges work together and find ways to provide services to their communities.

Judge Shirley also has been working-and this is incredible. This guy was a tough DA [district attorney], and I thought, Oh boy, let's see how he does as a district court judge. Listen to this. Judge Shirley also has been working with the prison system on developing resources to allow prisoners to type their pleadings, in lieu of the handwritten pleadings, and then e-file them. That should help tremendously. The e-filing system should help in the appeals process, similar to the helpful changes in the appellate cases from Washoe and Clark Counties as a result of their e-filing systems. Jim, you are a beautiful person. Thank you for what you do.

This number shows our workload continues to grow. This is our Court, the Supreme Court. In 2016, 2,452 cases were filed in the Supreme Court, almost 2,500 cases. It goes on and on, and I have a feeling we are going to get an influx of people from California who can't take it anymore, and they are going to come to northern Nevada and southern Nevada, and we're going to have a lot more people. We will be well over 3 million pretty soon. In 2016, we had 2,500 cases that were filed in the Supreme Court. With the addition of the Nevada Court of Appeals, we were able to assign 637 cases to the Court of Appeals. Now, I am the Chief Justice and the Court has been in effect since 2015, and they had '16 to do a bunch of cases. They did almost 700 cases in '16. And now I am assigning cases. And Abbi Silver, Chief Judge Abbi Silver, that former DA, that former municipal court judge, justice of the peace, district court judge-has promised me that if I give Mike and Abbi and Jerry a thousand cases, that they will be able to reduce our backlog so that justice will be swift in the state of Nevada. Good luck, Abbi. And Michael, I know you can do it.

Our trial courts also have been working hard to assure access to justice. Criminal filings increased by nearly 7 percent last year, with the primary cause a 13 percent increase in justice court criminal filings. Recent improvements in capturing data on civil matters have given the Judiciary a clearer picture of the types of civil cases impacting our courts. In particular, the district courts have improved the accuracy of assigning civil cases. This has led to speedier justice.

All of these developments are the result of efforts by the employees of the Nevada Judiciary who have worked hard to keep the judicial system up to date and accessible to Nevadans, and our success has been recognized by others. The Conference of State Court Administrators and the National Center for State Courts awarded the Administrative Office of the Courts with the Court Statistics Project Reporting Excellence Award in 2016. The award recognizes the Nevada Judiciary's work to improve caseload data reported to the National Center for State Courts. The Nevada statewide data model resulted in providing 92 percent publishable court statistics for the state's courts. This placed Nevada sixth in the nation for providing caseload statistics to the National Center for State Courts' national database. Publishable data is used for analysis by the Judiciary in learning how we can do a better job of providing access to justice.

The Nevada Association of Court Executives awarded the Administrative Office of the Courts with its 2015 Court of the Year Award. The award recognized the Judiciary for creating the Nevada Court of Appeals in less than two months and allowing the court to hear cases in January 2015. The Nevada Court of Appeals signified the start of a new era in Nevada justice, and one person really helped to usher this through in 2011 and 2013 so that the voters in 2014, after many tries and failures, were able to get a Court of Appeals. And of course, I am talking about no one other than the cookie man, Ben Graham. Now, in two short months, the staff of the Supreme Court implemented a brand new court, including but not limited to, setting up offices, computers, a case management system, budgets, court rules, filing procedures, and the investitures of the new judges. The completion of these tasks and many more enabled the Court of Appeals to commence operations on time and within budget. And again, the Nevada Supreme Court assigns cases to the Court of Appeals in a defunctive model. This was invented by Justice Hardesty and Justice Gibbons and then followed by Justice Parraguirre, and it is also being followed by me. And I tell my colleagues Gee, I thought maybe I could do something different. Jim, maybe it wasn't the best thing. Ron, maybe it wasn't the best thing. But what they've come up with, the way we were able to assign cases, is a magnificent thought and just works perfectly, as far as I'm concerned, and will reduce the caseload substantially over the next few years. The goal of the Court is to reduce the sizable backlog in appellate cases and eventually shortening the time for resolution of all appeals in Nevada. I want to say something else about my good friend Ben. He got everything through in 2011 so that then it could come to 2013 – it was Michael in 2011 that ushered it through, Kris Pickering in 2013. But the person who was most responsible in 2013, of course, was Ben Graham. How many Republicans voted for the Court of Appeals? All of you. How many Democrats voted for the Court of Appeals? All of you. In other words, there was no gridlock when it came to the Court of Appeals to go to the voters. One hundred percent of those in the Senate and the Assembly voted for the Court of Appeals, and we thank you, thank you, thank you.

Now, two weeks ago, the Nevada Supreme Court and the Nevada Court of Appeals moved to a new courthouse in Las Vegas. We just couldn't take going to the seventeenth floor in elevators

that didn't work or that would fall down. The building looks like a courthouse, from the statue of Lady Justice on the copper dome to the courtroom modeled after the first U.S. Supreme Courtroom. The new courthouse also features modern heating and cooling technology good enough for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold certification. The move from the Regional Justice Center will also save, Governor, you will like hearing this – approximately \$500,000 over the coming years in lease costs. Overall, the new courthouse will provide additional space in a modern building. It is an impressive courthouse, and we invite you to visit. Jim Hardesty worked day and night to make sure that everything got taken care of with the Governor, with the county, with the Court, with the RJC, to make sure we could leave, and we did a couple of weeks ago. He did a magnificent job. This is a magnificent courthouse, and we are having a grand opening on March 27 at 1 o'clock in the afternoon-that's a Monday-and we're hoping the Speaker can be there and Leader can be there, and all of the assistants and everybody else to come and see this beautiful edifice. And we've got a landlord, and he's more than a landlord. Well, we've got a developer, and he's more than a developer-the guy who made sure that we have this courthouse-and he and his right hand are here today. I want to present to you an artist, Yohan Lowie, and his right hand, Brett Harrison.

The Nevada Judiciary is blessed with many extraordinary people who work diligently with honor and integrity. The people and programs we have highlighted this evening showcase just a fraction of the many accomplishments and efforts of the Judiciary to improve access to justice. Without these dedicated members of the Legislative and Executive Branches, the Judiciary would be unable to meet our responsibility to Nevada. As the Chief Justice and the representative of the Judiciary, I thank you for your assistance in supporting our vision for providing fair and effective justice to all Nevadans. This is a wonderful state. I have been here 47 years and never regretted moving from Missouri and being in Las Vegas until 2006 and then living here in Carson since 2007. There are many opportunities and great people here in southern Nevada and northern Nevada. And when I talk about the road show, I encourage all of my friends in the Assembly and the Senate from southern Nevada to take a ride in rural Nevada. It is fantastic. It is gorgeous. It is God's gift to our state. I was so happy that Mark Gibbons encouraged me to go from place to place. And whenever we wanted to rest, we never went to a gas station; we always went to a courthouse. We'd go and meet everybody in the courthouse in rural Nevada, and it was just a wonderful experience. Nevada's Judiciary is a reflection of what you want it to be. This is your Judiciary and your system of justice. Many of you have taken the time to visit the courthouses in your communities. You have seen firsthand how the Judiciary works to improve the lives of Nevadans. We invite you to continue visiting and helping us to improve the services so important to our state. We also invite you to a reception at the Court, the Supreme Court rotunda, after this address.

In conclusion, I again wish to thank the Legislature for the privilege and honor of delivering this State of the Judiciary address. This thank you comes from all my colleagues in our Judiciary, who deeply appreciate your dedication and service to our state. I know what a sacrifice it is to leave your family for the 120 days, and hopefully maybe not a special session, and we certainly appreciate the work you do. As members of this Battle Born State government, I want to end it by recalling the words of Senator Edward Kennedy. People ask when you look at your duties and responsibilities, How do you feel? And this is what I want to leave you with, what Kennedy said: "[The] work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die." God bless all of you.

Now I always have to do something different. My mother, may she rest in peace, always called me a rebel. I am honored at this time to introduce Christina Bourne to you. Christina is a 15-year veteran educator and currently teaches music and band at Mark Twain Elementary School. She is also a former Miss Nevada, and at my request, Christina will perform "God Bless America." Christina.