

LEADING WITH HONOR

I'm excited to speak on a topic that is near and dear to my heart: the Judiciary and Leading with Honor. As I travel throughout the 20 counties that I serve, I always receive a warm welcome and thank you for your hospitality.

I'd like to start by telling you a little about myself and events that shaped who I am. My family instilled values of hard work and civic involvement that I carry to this day into my profession as your judge. From my Dad who was a pharmacist, I learned to work long hours; from my Mom who was a homemaker, I learned to be involved in organizations; from my sister who was in college, I learned to have fun; and from my older brother, I learned to run fast. 😊

I have fond memories of my childhood: playing in the grapefruit orchards, delivering the *Monitor* as a paperboy, and even the excitement of getting our very first Dairy Queen. But perhaps the most lasting experience was earning my Eagle Scout award. It taught me not only leadership skills, but more importantly, to be a leader who gives back to his community. This style of leadership I call "Leading with Honor," and I have taken it with me into my adulthood.

Before I share with you what it means to lead with honor, I've been asked to explain what I do at the courthouse. As your 13th Court of Appeals Justice, I don't enforce the law, that's the duty of your law enforcement; I don't create the law, that's up to your legislators; what I do is interpret the law according to the Constitution and the laws of the State; that's my job.

The best way to describe my job is that, like a professor, I read and grade the papers of the trial court to make sure that everyone received a fair trial. During the course of the year, I will write and review approximately 450 legal opinions. It is a great responsibility because, by these opinions, the court is mandating conduct in the State of Texas. My judicial philosophy is simple: judges should strictly interpret the statutes as written to make sure that everyone gets a fair trial.

Now that you know how I serve you as your judge, let me talk to you about the importance of leading with honor. Communities need leaders with a vision who can see the potential for improvement, and leaders have a responsibility to give back to their communities.

There is no one right way to be active as a community leader, but it's important to be involved and use your talents to help others.

So, how do you lead with honor? Here are 10 things leaders can do to make their community a better place:

1. *Serve others.*
2. *Lead with integrity.*
3. *Show respect to everyone.*
4. *Agree to disagree...without being disagreeable.*
5. *Take all things into account before making a decision.*
6. *Listen more. Talk less.*

- 7. *Reward and Discipline as necessary.***
- 8. *Treat everyone fairly.***
- 9. *Become an expert at what you do.***
- 10. *Lead a balanced life.* Make sure that your family, spiritual, and personal lives don't take a back seat to your career.**

What I particularly like about leading with honor is that it encourages civic responsibility. Civic responsibility means being an active citizen, being involved in your community. I try to practice what I preach. Groups that I give my time to include Rotary, Boy Scouts, Chamber and Leadership programs.

I have come full circle in my career. I was an inexperienced 27 year-old lawyer when I first walked through the courthouse doors; I returned nearly 25 years later at the age of 50, much more experienced, not only in law but in life, to sit on the bench as a judge.

I am humbled to have come this far...from a newspaper boy delivering papers to 80 customers in the Rio Grande Valley to a state judge who serves more than 2 million people in Texas. I appreciate that voters put their faith in me to do a good job.

During my first campaign, I emphasized three things: my qualifications, my willingness to work hard, and my belief in equal justice. These haven't changed in my 5 years on the bench. I am honored to serve as your Justice on the 13th

Court of Appeals. I am running for re-election in 2016 and would greatly appreciate your support!

In sum, I've worked hard to make fair decisions because the people of Texas deserve a court that will uphold the law. During my time on the bench, I've tried my best to be a judicial leader.

I hope that you will remember one or two of the leadership traits I spoke about and go out into your community and lead with honor.

May each of you be leaders of honor!