

**OPENING STATEMENT TO JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
TERENCE A. ZEMETIS**

Good afternoon Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee:

First, I sincerely thank Governor Rell for honoring me with a nomination to become a judge of the Connecticut Superior Court. I congratulate my fellow nominees for also receiving this high honor.

Second, let me introduce myself and briefly describe my background and relevant legal and community experience: I am Terry Zemetis, born and raised in Meriden, the third of six children, the son of Anthony and Helen Zemetis. My dad had a career both as a state trooper and as a teacher while my mom had a long career with the State ending as a professor of English at CCSU. I was educated in the Meriden public schools, a 1974 cum laude graduate of the University of Connecticut and a 1977 graduate of the Albany Law School. I live in Meriden with my wife of 31 years, my high school sweetheart, Barbara, who after 30 years of teaching elementary school now teaches art to inner city kids at the Meriden Boys and Girls Club. Our two children, Jeff and Elisabeth, are college graduates, Sarah Lawrence College and Providence College respectively, and are both working in the creative arts. My son works as a film editor and writer and my daughter as the owner of a floral design studio. They are bright, kindhearted and generous people making a serious contribution and we are very proud of them.

I began practicing law in 1977 with Joseph Delaney. This serendipitous association lasted for 31 years. Joe practiced law for over 50 years and was a great trial lawyer: brilliant, charismatic, handsome, eloquent and honest. He was a generous mentor. He shared his time, his talent and his practice with me and we've remained law partners and great friends. Since his retirement several years ago, we've remained in close contact. He has been the greatest influence on my legal career: he modeled excellence, discretion, hard work, integrity and imagination as we worked together to help our clients.

On the day I was sworn in, October 4, 1977, Joe helped me select my first civil jury and watched me try that case to conclusion - launching me on a long and happy career as a courtroom lawyer. I've since tried administrative law matters before state agencies, criminal cases, family relations cases, civil cases involving contractual and commercial disputes, professional negligence, premises liability, products liability, motor vehicle collisions and workers compensation claims. I've tried cases in all Connecticut courts: Probate Courts, housing courts, family courts, other divisions of our Superior Court and civil rights and diversity cases in our Federal District courts. I've tried a case in the Massachusetts trial court and a Vaccine Act case in the United States Claims Court. I've briefed and argued appeals in the Connecticut Appellate Court and the Connecticut Supreme Court. Additionally, I've presented many cases to arbitration panels. Over the course of my career, I've tried hundreds of cases to finality before a jury, a judge and/or an arbitration panel. In short, I've spent much of the last 30 years involved in a wide variety of litigation.

I've enjoyed professional success: for the past 15 years or more my peers have honored me with the highest ratings for ethics and legal ability in the Martindale-Hubbell legal directory. I've been inducted into the American Board of Trial Advocates. This is a 'by invitation only' national society of trial lawyers honored for professional excellence, civility and ethical behavior. Members of the bar and bench voted my inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America*, Woodward/White, each year from 2002 –2008.

I've been invited to present lectures and to teach at trial practice seminars for the American Arbitration Association, Connecticut Bar Association, Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, Connecticut Defense Lawyers Association, Connecticut Probate Assembly, Connecticut Judicial Branch Continuing Education section, New Haven County Bar Association, National Institute of Trial Advocacy and other groups. I've lectured on legal ethics, trial evidence, procedure and practice, arbitration and mediation, insurance coverage matters and taught many days of trial skills development training. I've been a guest lecturer at the UConn Law School and Quinnipiac Law School trial practice classes. Over the years I've given hundreds of hours of my time preparing and presenting seminars and demonstrations for my brothers and sisters at the bar and bench - and all the efforts were pro bono.

I've served as a Special Master in pretrial settlement programs in the Federal District Court and the Connecticut Superior Court. I've served many times, without compensation, as Superior Court appointed arbitrator in the "Court Annexed Arbitration Program" in Meriden, Middletown and New Britain.

During the past 10+ years I have arbitrated and/or mediated over 400 disputes. Lawyers have withdrawn cases from court, or prior to filing suit, presented the dispute to me accepting my decision as binding. In these proceedings the parties present the case just as they would in court, I decide questions of procedure and evidence, consider all the evidence and write a finding and award. I've included one such decision in my written materials as explanatory of this type of work.

Many other lawyers asked me to mediate a difficult case. I've mediated all sorts of cases: aviation disputes, commercial matters, insurance matters of many types, professional liability claims such as medical negligence claims against doctors or hospitals, municipal liability cases and even cases involving federal civil rights claims. This work is professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling. The work is varied, interesting and challenging. The participation is completely voluntary - all counsel and parties must agree to my selection – and the mediation success rate is greater than 90% - and I have many, many repeat customers. Repeated selection by some of the best lawyers in Connecticut – well, that's an example of 'voting with your feet'.

I've been active in my community: I've chaired the City of Meriden Aviation Commission during the past 8 years during which, working intensively with the FAA and ConnDot, we've made major capital improvements at our local airport. This work has been very interesting and coordinates with my aviation interests: I hold a FAA private pilot's license with an instrument rating and own and fly a private plane. I am a member of the Lawyer-Pilot Bar Association, the National Transportation and Safety Board Bar Association and a number of pilot associations.

I served 10 years on the Meriden Boys and Girls Club Board of Directors including two years as President of the board and my wife and I remain active in the club today. The club serves the inner city kids of Meriden. I grew up attending the Boys' Club where my dad, then a lieutenant in the Connecticut State Police, ran the rifle range – with an iron hand – and taught us about firearms safety and proficiency.

I've served on the board of directors of the Spanish Community of Wallingford for a number of years and donated a great deal of time and energy to pro bono work for the Hispanic community members. I've also given legal counsel and washed many pots and pans for a wonderful charity for sick and needy children in Wallingford: the Wallingford Wishing Well.

I'm honored to appear before this committee and I look forward to answering your questions about my legal experience, qualifications and credentials to fill this very important position as judge of the Superior Court. I hope to continue the long tradition of excellence in the Connecticut Judicial Branch by acting with intelligence, patience, impartiality and respect for all who participate in the judicial system.