

OPENING STATEMENT OF SHEILA A. OZALIS

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawler and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Sheila Ozalis and it is a pleasure to appear before you. I am both honored and grateful to be considered for a position on the Connecticut Superior Court. I want to thank Governor Rell for putting my name before you. I also want to thank the Committee for its time and effort in performing this important task.

I was born in Philadelphia, PA in 1962. I was raised in southern New Jersey in the town of Cinnaminson. One of the biggest influences in my life was my mother who in her short life taught me many valuable life lessons. My mother was raised in London, England during World War II. Due to the death of her father she had to leave school at the age of 12 to get a job as a sewing machinist to help support her family. She came to the United States in 1949 and met and married my father. Notwithstanding the numerous hardships my mother had to endure, including life during the London Blitz, she remained optimistic in the beauty of life and that in every hardship there is an opportunity for something good to come out of it. She showed me the importance of standing up to injustice and instilled in me the belief that no dream was unattainable.

I graduated from high school in 1980 and was the first one in my family to graduate from college. My father worked as a shoe salesman and since my family did not have the financial resources to send me to college, I worked a number of jobs and used student loans to finance college and law school. I attended Drew University and graduated with a degree in chemistry in 1984. During my time at Drew University and after graduation I worked as a research scientist for Ashland and Allied Chemical companies. While I enjoyed my work there, it only reinforced my desire to become a lawyer and use my chemical background in that capacity. I graduated from Pace University School of Law in 1987 and was a member of the Law Review.

Upon graduating from law school, I joined the firm of Kenyon & Kenyon, a patent, trademark & copyright firm, in New York City. While I enjoyed the patent and trademark litigation work I did at Kenyon, I joined the firm of Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts seeking work in a more diversified practice area. I worked in the Stamford CT office of Winthrop until 1997, litigating both large complex litigation matters and small foreclosure matters for local CT banks. I litigated commercial, securities, tort, contract, insurance, environmental, intellectual property, bankruptcy and foreclosure matters. I tried a number of cases at Winthrop and was given lead and joint trial roles in major trials.

In 1997, I formed my own firm with my husband. My goal in opening my own firm was to be able to litigate matters that interested me while creating a schedule that complimented my family life. My litigation practice over the last 12 years has encompassed both large complex and small litigations in areas ranging from intellectual property, tort, commercial, corporate, employment, foreclosure, and personal injury

matters. I have represented large, mid-size and small corporations and individuals and also handled a number of pro bono civil and foreclosure matters. In addition to trying cases, I also had the opportunity to argue before the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals and Connecticut Appellate Court and one of my matters has been before the United States Supreme Court. I am grateful to have had unique, challenging cases throughout my entire career that pushed me to be a better lawyer. One of the things I look forward to if I am given the opportunity to be a Judge is the challenge of working in and learning different areas of the law. I enjoyed that challenge throughout my entire career.

Personally, I have been married to my husband Mark for almost 22 years. We met at Pace Law School 24 years ago. We have two children Sheila (14) and Alex (12). We have lived in Newtown since 2004 and prior to that lived in Easton for 10 years. I coached girls' softball teams in both towns, was President of the Easton Softball League and ran the Newtown Babe Ruth Softball Fall league.

I have served on a number of private school boards and asked to take a leadership role in such boards. I was asked by the Town of Easton to be a part of a Building Committee that reviewed necessary repairs and renovations to the local elementary school after concerns were raised by faculty regarding mold issues in the school. At the first meeting, I was voted co-chairman of the committee. During the course of our work, my committee also uncovered that the head of a mold remediation company that had been brought in by the school to treat mold had used fabricated test data in the test reports submitted and that the chemical he claimed to have used in treatment wasn't in fact used. We contacted federal authorities and our investigation and findings lead federal authorities to search his place of business. A federal indictment and conviction followed.

When I finished the first twenty years of my career, I looked back on the work I had done and firms I had worked with. I was happy with what I had accomplished and grateful for the training received. In looking at the next 20 years of my career I decided that I would regret it if I did not devote the next phase of my career to public service. What service means to me is to be a servant, not to be served. If I am a judge, I hope to serve the people of Connecticut in an intelligent, fair, patient, compassionate and humble manner.

We currently live in times that try men's souls. More than ever, I believe it is important for people who come before our judiciary on any matter to be able to walk away from that proceeding feeling that the Judge involved patiently listened to what they had to say, understood their concerns, fears, and hopes, was compassionate about the trials they were undergoing and treated them with respect. I feel this is especially so in the increasing numbers of pro se cases coming into the court system. If I am a judge, I will endeavor to do all of those things to the best of my ability.

I appreciate your attention and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have for me. Thank you.