



# KEEP OUR REPUBLIC

## Alliance of Former Chief Justices – Open Letter

Accumulating the immense powers of government in the same hands “may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny,” wrote Founding Father and later President James Madison. So in America, those powers are divided by the U.S. Constitution and every state constitution among three branches—executive, legislative, and judicial.

All state judges take an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution and their state constitution, which includes respecting the constitutional division of power among the branches. Members of the executive and legislative branches seek election by promising to pursue policies favored by their various constituents. Judges, however, have only one constituent: the rule of law. By their oath, judges promise equal justice to all without regard to means, position, background, or social standing—and certainly without regard to politics. This is true whatever the method their state uses to select and retain judges in office.

Judges cannot take sides and keep their oath to provide equal justice to all. Some people, particularly those with strong policy views, chafe under this system. They may attack judges in the hope of influencing their rulings or convincing the public that the judiciary is just another political branch. While commenting on whether particular cases were rightly or wrongly decided is a basic part of public discourse, assertions that judges are mere politicians in robes are different. Such attacks undermine the integrity of the rule of law and threaten the promise of equal justice. These attacks upset the careful balance that Madison and the other Founders crafted to limit government overreach and protect the freedoms of all.

Former chief justices of state supreme courts understand this. All have led their states’ judicial branch of government, working to see that our laws are fairly administered in tens of millions of cases each year—civil, criminal, family, juvenile, housing, and others. They can help the public better understand how an independent judiciary that ensures the rule of law is vital to every American. As President Dwight Eisenhower recognized in creating Law Day, “If civilization is to survive, it must choose the rule of law.”

On this Bill of Rights Day—December 15—we publicly and proudly pledge our continued dedication to protecting both the blessings of liberty and the rule of law by creating the Alliance of Former Chief Justices. We and others who join this mission will work with judges, lawyers, legislators, other public officials, and all people for the strong and independent judiciary our Founders envisioned.

Sincerely,

**Chief Justice Jeffrey L. Amestoy** — Formerly of the Vermont Supreme Court



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**Chief Justice W. Scott Bales** — Formerly of the Arizona Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Thomas A. Balmer** — Formerly of the Oregon Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Rebecca W. Berch** — Formerly of the Arizona Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Kathleen A. Blatz** — Formerly of the Minnesota Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Ann Walsh Bradley** — Formerly of the Wisconsin Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Eric S. Brown** — Formerly of the Ohio Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Roger S. Burdick** — Formerly of the Idaho Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye** — Formerly of the California Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Ronald D. Castille** — Formerly of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Walter Carpeneti** — Formerly of the Alaska Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb** — Formerly of the Alabama Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Christine M. Durham** — Formerly of the Utah Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Stanley Feldman** — Formerly of the Arizona Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Ronald M. George** — Formerly of the California Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice David E. Gilbertson** — Formerly of the South Dakota Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Major B. Harding** — Formerly of the Florida Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht** — Formerly of the Texas Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Roderick L. Ireland** — Formerly of the Massachusetts Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Wallace B. Jefferson** — Formerly of the Texas Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Bernette J. Johnson** — Formerly of the Louisiana Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Sharon G. Lee** — Formerly of the Tennessee Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis** — Formerly of the Florida Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Eric J. Magnuson** — Formerly of the Minnesota Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Conrad L. Mallett** — Formerly of the Michigan Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall** — Formerly of the Massachusetts Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Ruth V. McGregor** — Formerly of the Arizona Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Robert A. Miller** — Formerly of the South Dakota Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Lawton R. Nuss** — Formerly of the Kansas Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor** — Formerly of the Ohio Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Barbara J. Pariente** — Formerly of the Florida Supreme Court  
**Chief Justice Thomas R. Phillips** — Formerly of the Texas Supreme Court



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**Chief Justice Costa M. Pleicones** — Formerly of the South Carolina Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald** — Formerly of the Hawai'i Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Lyle Reid** — Formerly of the Tennessee Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Myron T. Steele** — Formerly of the Delaware Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Laura Denvir Stith** — Formerly of the Missouri Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Marsha K. Ternus** — Formerly of the Iowa Supreme Court

**Chief Justice William L. Waller** — Formerly of the Mississippi Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Martha L. Walters** — Formerly of the Oregon Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Daniel E. Wathen** — Formerly of the Maine Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Michael A. Wolff** — Formerly of the Missouri Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Margaret L. Workman** — Formerly of the West Virginia Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Michael D. Zimmerman** — Formerly of the Utah Supreme Court

**Chief Justice Thomas A. Zlaket** — Formerly of the Arizona Supreme Court