



Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Tells Stockton Audience of Early Struggles, and Boosts Civics

Inaugural Presentation of The Pappas Visiting Scholar Series

For Immediate Release; Photos and captions on [Flickr](#)

Monday, March 24, 2014

**Contact: Maryjane Briant
News and Media Relations Director
Galloway Township, NJ 08205
Maryjane.Briant@stockton.edu
(609) 652-4593**

Galloway, NJ - Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (ret.), the first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, told about 3,000 people attending her presentation on March 24, 2014 at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey that "we have to teach civics" so young people know how to be engaged citizens.

"Democracy is not a spectator sport," is one of her oft-quoted maxims. She said she started www.iCivics.org, a web site with lessons and games that teach young people how government works, to get them involved.

She said three people who write college entrance exams recently told her that they will be including civics questions on those exams. She wants elementary and high schools to start teaching it in all 50 states, as they did when she was a student, and if it's on college exams, that will provide an impetus, she said.

Justice O'Connor was the inaugural speaker for The Pappas Visiting Scholar Series at Stockton. Justice O'Connor was appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981, and served until 2006. She was awarded the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, by President Barack Obama in 2009.

Thomas Wilner, who successfully represented Guantanamo detainees before the Supreme Court in 2004 and 2008, served as moderator for Justice O'Connor's 6 p.m. presentation in the Sports Center. Wilner is the head of Shearman & Sterling's International Trade & Investment Practice in Washington, D.C.

President Herman Saatkamp thanked Justice O'Connor in his welcoming remarks, noting, "She makes a limited number of these appearances and we are so pleased and honored that she agreed to come to Stockton."

-more-

-continued from page 1-

“Tonight’s event is made possible through the generosity of Dean and Zoe Pappas,” President Saatkamp continued. “Dean Pappas, a member of the Stockton College Board of Trustees since 2006, and his wife, Zoe, established The Pappas Visiting Scholar Series to allow Stockton students, faculty, staff and community access to outstanding visiting scholars. It is important to note that the Stockton community is blessed with this extraordinary opportunity because of the generous, philanthropic support of Dean and Zoe Pappas. Their support is example of the amazing impact of philanthropy and we are pleased to recognize and thank them for making such an important difference on our campus.”

Audrey Wolfson Latourette, J.D., Distinguished Professor of Business Law at Stockton, introduced Justice O’Connor and Thomas Wilner.

“When Justice O’Connor entered Stanford Law School, only 1 percent of law students were women,” said Professor Latourette. “Her appointment to the Supreme Court and her subsequent performance on the court, according to Stanford law professor Kathleen Sullivan, ‘changed the landscape for women lawyers forever.’ ”

“Now we can relax and talk,” said the justice when the introductions were over. She told stories in response to questions from Wilner, ranging from growing up on a ranch with no telephone and no electricity, to being at the top of her class at Stanford Law and not being able to get one job interview.

Finally she got a job at the office of the county attorney in San Mateo County, CA, but they didn’t pay her at first. “Finally, they did,” she said.

Justice O’Connor said she thinks women’s rights are progressing, but “there’s no easy answer” to the problems of having a career and raising children. Asked by Wilner if men should step it up, she said: “They probably should, but it’s not likely to happen.”

As to her nomination to the Supreme Court, she said when Ronald Reagan was campaigning for president and wanted more female votes, he promised to put a woman on the Supreme Court if elected.

She said she was sitting in her office one day (in 1981 at the Arizona Court of Appeals) when the phone rang.

She answered, and when the president came on the line, he said: “I’d like to announce your nomination for the Supreme Court tomorrow - is that all right with you?”

“I’d be honored,” she said.

“Fine, we’ll take care of it,” he said and hung up, the justice recalled.

As the first woman on the court, she said everyone was “very cordial” but it was a few months before she became comfortable with the new responsibilities. She said she was glad when Ruth Bader Ginsburg was named a justice and added, “It’s very satisfying to me” to see three women on the Supreme Court now.

Students were able to interact with Justice O’Connor at several times during the day, including at a luncheon. Mico Lucide, 22, a Political Science major from Galloway taking pre-law courses,

-more-

-continued from page 2-

said it was “breathtaking” to have been able to ask questions and speak with her in a small gathering.

“It was incredible to have that experience of virtually a one-on-one conversation with her,” he said. He added that such an event is important to Stockton, which is “really rising in recognition.”

Dean Pappas, who is vice chairman of the Board of Trustees, and his wife, Zoe, donated \$1 million to establish the Dean C. and Zoe S. Pappas Visiting Scholar Endowment Fund in 2012. The Pappas Visiting Scholar Series is designed to bring noted scholars and thought leaders to Stockton for classes, workshops and public events.

Pappas has said he underwent “a transformational experience” as an undergraduate college student at Dickinson College in 1961, when he heard the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak.

“Until that point I was sort of drifting my way through college, but Dr. King’s message was very impressive,” said Pappas. “It made me start to think more seriously about my future. Basically, his message was to act responsibly. It was a moment that changed my life.”

Pappas said he wanted students at Stockton to have similar access to outstanding visiting scholars.

President Saatkamp and Provost Harvey Kesselman, executive vice president of the college, presented Justice O’Connor with an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree.

“I have a hood,” she exclaimed, referring to the special attire worn to confer graduate degrees. “I am very honored indeed.”

The evening ended with those gathered singing “Happy Birthday” to Justice O’Connor, who will turn 84 on Wednesday.

#