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The Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) hosted its initial Rule of Law Conference in June of 2010. The 2010 conference provided a positive assessment of Connecticut’s judiciary but expressed concern as to Connecticut’s administrative agencies. Accordingly, the CBA hosted a second Rule of Law Conference on November 16, 2012 at the Connecticut Legislative Office Building. The 2012 conference responded to the concerns of the 2010 conference and focused on the principles of the Rule of Law as they apply to the functioning of administrative agencies. The conference gathered leaders from the Connecticut judiciary, the legislative agencies, and the business community. The conference re-

The Rule of Law

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affirmed that the Rule of Law is not solely the province of judges and lawyers, and that all of Connecticut’s community leaders have a central role in both shaping and defending this fundamental concept.

On December 6, 2018, the CBA, in collaboration with the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) hosted its third Rule of Law Conference and first since the 2012 conference. We felt it was imperative to hold a Rule of Law Conference this year due to the changing landscape of our country. At this year’s conference, we brought together politicians, members of the media, and students to examine the challenges to the Rule of Law, their role in its advancement, and how we can safeguard the Rule of Law for the future.

Throughout this issue of *Connecticut Lawyer*, you will have the opportunity to read about the conference. If you read nothing else in *Connecticut Lawyer* this year, please find the time to read the keynote address by former FBI Agent and current Yale University senior lecturer and CNN contributor, Asha Rangappa, and the closing remarks by Connecticut Supreme Court Justice Andrew J. McDonald. Their comments were eye-opening and compelling.

Attorney Rangappa’s speech highlighted some of the issues challenging our democracy. She cited research from Professor Tom Tyler of Yale Law School that between 70-90 percent of people surveyed expressed low levels of trust and confidence in the United States Supreme Court. A poll conducted last April by NPR and Marist found that 61 percent of Americans believe that the FBI is unbiased and doing its job—but that was a precipitous ten percent drop from just two months prior. Justice McDonald highlighted the attempts to intrude on judicial independence throughout the country. At its core, Attorney Rangappa’s message was clear and straightforward: To undermine the Rule of Law, the justice system does not have to be corrupt. You only need to convince the public that it is corrupt and unfair.

In former Vice President Al Gore’s 2000 concession speech, he said: “Now the U.S. Supreme Court has spoken. Let there be no doubt, while I strongly disagree with the court’s decision, I accept it. I accept the finality of this outcome, which will be ratified next Monday in the Electoral College. And tonight, for the sake of our unity as a people and the strength of our democracy, I offer my concession.” Regardless of

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your politics, that is respect for the Rule of Law. That respect is waning. A quick look at anyone's Facebook feed and you can see the growing lack of trust in our system.

I have always considered myself to be realistic while hoping that we strive to achieve the ideals we champion. The conference gave me renewed hope that this is still possible. Of the attendees, nearly half were students. They were intelligent, inquisitive, and engaging. The questions they asked were poignant and insightful. You can tell these students were thirsty for knowledge. We must give them and the general public the tools they need to

value, safeguard, and advance the Rule of Law. We must help restore faith in the Rule of Law and judicial independence. And we must do so with a renewed sense of urgency. But how?

We are in the process of preparing a summary and action plan arising out of the conference. It is clear greater education about the Rule of Law needs to be provided to the public—both younger and older. This education must encompass explaining to the public, including the media, the judicial process that is fundamental to the Rule of Law and the importance of judicial independence. In order to do so, we will

develop programming and resources, including an online library and regular blog, to educate the press and the public. We also intend on collaborating with the judicial branch to hold community and town meetings to further educate the public. We will provide continuing and increased support to programming that teaches civics education to our younger generations. To oversee these efforts, we will establish a Rule of Law Committee dedicated to its protection. My hope is that many of you will join us in these efforts, and I invite you to reach out to me if you are willing to join me. ■

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