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Statement on the Death of Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist  
Sunday, September 4, 2005  
Draft #8

Good morning.

Our Nation is saddened today by the news that Chief Justice William Rehnquist passed away last night. Laura and I send our respect and deepest sympathy to this good man's children – Jim, Janet, and Nancy<sup>1</sup> – and to all the members of their family.

William H. Rehnquist was born and raised in Wisconsin, and was the grandson of Swedish immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Like so many of his generation, he served in the Army during World War Two<sup>3</sup> and went to college with the help of the G.I. Bill.<sup>4</sup> He studied law at Stanford University, and graduated first in a class that included his future colleague Sandra Day O'Connor.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Family: William Hubbs Rehnquist was born October 1, 1924, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the son of William Benjamin Rehnquist, a paper salesman, and Margery Peck Rehnquist. **Rehnquist married Natalie Cornell of San Diego, California, and had 3 children: James in 1955, Janet in 1957, and Nancy in 1959.** The family is a member of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Bethesda, Maryland." FindLaw, Constitutional Law Center, Supreme Court Justices, "William H. Rehnquist" ([http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme\\_court/justices/rehnquist.html](http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/justices/rehnquist.html))

<sup>2</sup> "**William Hubbs Rehnquist was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on October 1, 1924. He grew up in the well-to-do Milwaukee suburb of Shorewood** where his father, a first generation American of Swedish parentage, was a wholesale paper salesman." "William Hubbs Rehnquist." Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2nd ed. 17 Vols. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2005. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>)

<sup>3</sup> "**At 17 during World War II the young Rehnquist volunteered as a neighborhood civil defense officer. After attending one year of college on scholarship, he joined the Army Air Corps as a weather observer, serving principally in North Africa from 1943 to 1946.** When he returned from Africa he first used his G.I. Bill benefits, then worked various part-time jobs to attend Stanford University in California." "William Hubbs Rehnquist." Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2nd ed. 17 Vols. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2005. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>)

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<sup>5</sup> "Like many Americans in his generation, Rehnquist attended college after World War II with the support of scholarship money from the GI Bill. At Stanford, he earned both a bachelor and a master of arts degree in political science. A distinguished student, Rehnquist was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1948. He continued his education at Harvard where he received another master of arts degree -- this time in

Mr. Rehnquist and his late wife, Nan,<sup>6</sup> raised their family in Phoenix, where he built a career as one of Arizona's leading attorneys.<sup>7</sup> He went on to even greater distinction in public service – as an assistant U.S. attorney general<sup>8</sup> ... associate justice of the Supreme Court<sup>9</sup> ... and, for the past 19

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government -- **two years later. Rehnquist returned to Stanford Law School in 1950; he graduated at the top of his class. (Sandra Day O'Connor, who would eventually serve with him on the Supreme Court, graduated third from that same class.)**" OYEZ, The U.S. Supreme Court, "William H. Rehnquist" ([http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/legal\\_entity/100/biography](http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/legal_entity/100/biography))

<sup>6</sup> "Rehnquist graduated from Stanford Law School in 1952 along with future fellow Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. After graduation, Rehnquist clerked at the U.S. Supreme Court for Justice Robert H. Jackson. In 1953, after completing his clerkship, Rehnquist married Natalie "Nan" Cornell, whom he had met at Stanford. The couple had two daughters and one son." Stanford Law School, "One-on-One with the Chief." *The Stanford Lawyer* (<http://www.law.stanford.edu/publications/lawyer/issues/72/1on1Rehnquist.html>)

<sup>7</sup> "**After completing his clerkship, the Rehnquists moved to Phoenix, Arizona**, a city noted for its conservative bent. Once there, Rehnquist established a private practice and became increasingly involved in Republican politics. **He soon achieved prominence** and in 1958 was chosen as a special Arizona state prosecutor involved in bringing charges against several state officials accused of state highway frauds. He publicly opposed a number of legislative initiatives over the years, including one that would institute busing to achieve racial integration of the schools." "William Hubbs Rehnquist." Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2nd ed. 17 Vols. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2005. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>)

<sup>8</sup> :Following his election in 1968, Nixon appointed Kleindienst as deputy attorney general. **Kleindienst then chose Rehnquist as assistant attorney general responsible for the Office of Legal Counsel. During his two and a half years at the Justice Department Rehnquist turned what had been an obscure position into a focus of publicity and a target for criticism from liberals and Democrats.** Among other controversial positions, Rehnquist defended the constitutionality of the president's policies in Indochina, Nixon's orders barring disclosure of certain government documents, and the mass arrest of peaceful demonstrators. He strongly supported the administration's stringent law-and-order program, including "no-knock" entries, pretrial detention, wire tapping, and electronic surveillance, and repeatedly stated the view that the Supreme Court had been too vigilant in defending the rights of the accused. Such positions were consistent with Nixon's desire to appoint "judicial conservatives" to the Supreme Court, and the president nominated Rehnquist and Lewis F. Powell, Jr., a noted Virginia lawyer, to be associate justices on October 21, 1971." "William Hubbs Rehnquist." Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2nd ed. 17 Vols. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2005. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>)

<sup>9</sup> "Judicial Offices: **Nominated Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States by President Nixon on October 21, 1971; affirmed by a 68-26 Senate vote. Sworn in on January 7, 1972.** Nominated Chief Justice of the United States by President Reagan on June 17, 1986; affirmed by a 65-33 Senate vote on September 25, 1986 and sworn in on September 26, 1986. As Chief Justice, Rehnquist serves as Chairman of the Judicial Conference of the United States and as Chairman of the Federal Judicial Center." FindLaw, Constitutional Law Center, Supreme Court Justices, "William H. Rehnquist" ([http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme\\_court/justices/rehnquist.html](http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/justices/rehnquist.html))

years, Chief Justice of the United States.<sup>10</sup> He was extremely well respected for his powerful intellect, his deep commitment to the rule of law, and his profound devotion to duty.<sup>11</sup> He provided superb leadership for the federal court system,<sup>12</sup> improving the delivery of justice for the American people and earning the admiration of colleagues throughout the judiciary. Even during a period of illness, Chief Justice Rehnquist stayed on the job to complete the work of his final Supreme Court term<sup>13</sup> ... and I was honored and touched when he came to the Capitol for the swearing-in last January.<sup>14</sup> He was a man of character and dedication, and his departure represents a great loss for the Court and for the country.

There are now two vacancies on the Supreme Court, and it will serve the best interests of the nation to fill those vacancies promptly. Working with my staff and the Department of Justice, I will choose, in a timely manner, a highly qualified nominee to succeed Chief Justice Rehnquist.

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<sup>10</sup>“Judicial Offices: Nominated Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States by President Nixon on October 21, 1971; affirmed by a 68-26 Senate vote. Sworn in on January 7, 1972. **Nominated Chief Justice of the United States by President Reagan on June 17, 1986; affirmed by a 65-33 Senate vote on September 25, 1986 and sworn in on September 26, 1986.** As Chief Justice, Rehnquist serves as Chairman of the Judicial Conference of the United States and as Chairman of the Federal Judicial Center.” FindLaw, Constitutional Law Center, Supreme Court Justices, “William H. Rehnquist” ([http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme\\_court/justices/rehnquist.html](http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/justices/rehnquist.html))

<sup>11</sup> “As chief justice, Rehnquist won the respect of his colleagues through his efficient management of court affairs.” OYEZ, The U.S. Supreme Court, “William H. Rehnquist” ([http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/legal\\_entity/100/biography](http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/legal_entity/100/biography))

<sup>12</sup>“Judicial Offices: Nominated Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States by President Nixon on October 21, 1971; affirmed by a 68-26 Senate vote. Sworn in on January 7, 1972. Nominated Chief Justice of the United States by President Reagan on June 17, 1986; affirmed by a 65-33 Senate vote on September 25, 1986 and sworn in on September 26, 1986. **As Chief Justice, Rehnquist serves as Chairman of the Judicial Conference of the United States and as Chairman of the Federal Judicial Center.**” FindLaw, Constitutional Law Center, Supreme Court Justices, “William H. Rehnquist” ([http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme\\_court/justices/rehnquist.html](http://supreme.lp.findlaw.com/supreme_court/justices/rehnquist.html))

<sup>13</sup>“Chief Justice William Rehnquist announced Thursday night that he has no plans to step down from the Supreme Court and will continue to serve as long as he can. “I want to put to rest the speculation and unfounded rumors of my imminent retirement,” Rehnquist said in a statement released through his family. “I am not about to announce my retirement. I will continue to perform my duties as chief justice as long as my health permits.” “Rehnquist silences retirement speculation,” *CNN News*, July 14, 2005 (<http://www.cnn.com/2005/LAW/07/14/rehnquist.health/>)

<sup>14</sup>“Moments before he administered the oath, Rehnquist arrived to a standing ovation from the crowd. Rehnquist gripped a cane in his right hand as he walked slowly without assistance down to the Capitol stage where Bush took the oath. Rehnquist shook the president's hand, then returned to his seat. Rehnquist was pale and walked stiffly. He administered the oath in a clear, raspy voice.” “Rehnquist swears in Bush. Despite cancer, chief justice administers oath for fifth time,” *CNN News*, January 20, 2005 (<http://www.cnn.com/2005/LAW/01/20/rehnquist.inauguration/>)

As we look to the future of the Supreme Court, citizens of this nation can also look with pride and appreciation on the career of our late Chief Justice. More than a half century has passed since William H. Rehnquist first came to the Supreme Court as a young law clerk.<sup>15</sup> All of his years, William Rehnquist revered the Constitution and laws of the United States ... and he led the judicial branch of government with tremendous wisdom and skill. He honored America with a lifetime of service, and America will honor his memory.

Thank you.

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<sup>15</sup> "His conservative views were solidly established by this time and he was a willing and able debater on any political issues of the day. **Such impressive accomplishments earned Rehnquist a prestigious 18-month clerkship in 1952-1953 with Associate Justice Robert H. Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court.** In 1953 he married Natalie Cornell, a fellow Stanford student." "William Hubbs Rehnquist." Encyclopedia of World Biography, 2nd ed. 17 Vols. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2005. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>)