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William J. Brennan, Jr.

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DEDICATION
TO
WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS

William J. Brennan, Jr.*

On the occasion of the retirement of William O. Douglas from the United States Supreme Court on November 12, 1975, lawgivers from across the spectrum of political philosophy attested to Justice Douglas' assured place in our national history. Numerous articles and editorials from all over the country esteeming his life and work and his extraordinary contributions to the well-being of the American people were also made part of the official *Congressional Record*.¹ I need recite only a little of what was said to explain why I, his friend and colleague of over two decades, felt such great pride in this recognition that this remarkable American so richly deserved.

"Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, Justice Douglas is the first Justice of the land, not only in longevity of service, but also in distinction of service. He has frequently stood courageously for unpopular positions and frequently has been far ahead of the times. He is widely recognized as one of the most brilliant men who has ever sat on the U.S. Supreme Court. He has a well-deserved reputation for tenacious integrity to his principles."

"[T]he void left is immense. . . . We have grown dependent on William Douglas as the protector of the Bill of Rights, and he has provided us with a great legacy. He has shown us the way; in some areas he alone has charted the course; he has taught us—in both his legal and personal writings—how to preserve ourselves and our rights, how to use the Bill of Rights as the foremost standard by which to measure the actions and interactions of a democratic society."

"The law today in America which Justice Douglas helped to establish makes America better. The people of this country have greater rights and privileges and are more assured of liberty than would be the case had it not been for the work of Mr. Justice Douglas on the Supreme Court."

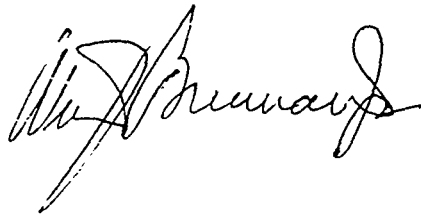
"He dissented from the elitism and fear of the wisdom of the public that afflicts so many men and women who rise to positions of power. When others sought to stifle speech and ideas under the guise of protecting the people, his confidence in the ability of people to discern the truth remained unshaken."

*Associate Justice, United States Supreme Court, 1956–present; B.S. Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania, 1928; LL.B., Harvard University, 1931.

I. TRIBUTES TO HONORABLE WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS, H.R. DOC. NO. 622, 94TH CONG., 2D SESS. (1976).

“It is ironic that this man, of all men, sometimes became the target of zealous cranks who found contentment with their own level of patriotism only by trying to tear down his. It is ironic because Justice Douglas is, above all, a man who loves his country intensely. He loves the physical country, reveling in particular in the raw splendor of our Western wilds where many mountains and steams remain untarnished by the hand of humankind. But he also loves what this country is, what it stands for. He is ever true to its beliefs. He has been as determined to preserve all of our freedoms as he has been to preserve at least some of our natural heritage. Thus he is a most faithful American who has helped us all to keep the faith.”

Thus it is that a common theme of all the tributes was that here surely was a Justice to rank with the very great of the Court's history. And now he has left us. The personal loss for me is immense. It is as a friend that I shall particularly cherish him. And I shall continue to miss his presence in our conference room. His protracted illness did not still the brilliant, imaginative probing for answers that characterized his remarkable career. No Justice in the Court's history has left a more indelible imprint upon constitutional jurisprudence. And his truly great record epitomized the truth that great judges are also great teachers. No voice has more powerfully and lucidly articulated for all Americans the values we must protect and preserve for freedom to live.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Brennan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "W" and a long, trailing flourish at the end.