

*Chief Judge of the State of New York*



*Jonathan Lippman*

September 11, 2014

Honorable Fern A. Fisher  
111 Centre Street,  
New York, NY 10013

Re: A Tribute to the Sacrifice Made on September 11

Good afternoon to you all.

It is an honor and a privilege to be part of the court system's commemoration of September 11, 2001. As New Yorkers, it is a rare day where we are not confronted with little reminders of how our lives were forever changed by that tragic day. It may come in the form of our eye catching the dazzling façade of One World Trade Center in the New York skyline or the news of horrific terrorist acts overseas or the feeling of hollowness in our hearts from the loss of a family member, friend, or loved one on 9/11.

But today especially we pause to remember, mourn, and celebrate the lives of those that were lost. In our very own court family, three dear, departed colleagues paid the ultimate price when they raced to help the injured and trapped as the towers came crashing down. Captain William Harry Thompson, Sergeant Mitchel Wallace, and Sergeant Thomas Jurgens gave their lives and exhibited immense bravery and courage in the face of grave danger. We honor Harry, Mitch, and Tommy today with great pride and gratitude and extend our most heartfelt thanks and sympathy to their families. Words cannot express the depth of appreciation and respect we bear for our fallen heroes, and for the many court officers, police, and firefighters who served faithfully and helped their fellow human beings at great cost to themselves on September 11<sup>th</sup>. For the uniformed men and women who perished and those who survived, their contributions are a testament to the heroism and compassion of which we are capable as people. Several years ago, Congress designated September 11<sup>th</sup> as a National Day of Service and Remembrance. It is only fitting that here in New York and around the nation, people would dedicate today to serve their communities and to show kindness to one another in extremely tangible ways. Each act of service is a tiny echo of what Harry, Mitch, and Tommy did for us thirteen years ago.

While some honor our heroes and keep their memories alive through community service, we in the courts give recognition to their legacy by fulfilling a special purpose in

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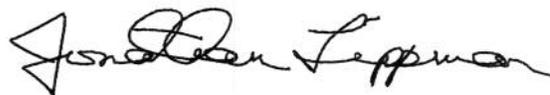
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our democracy. Our courthouses are among the most powerful and visible symbols of America's freedom and of what makes our nation so unique. In the days after 9/11, our judges and our court family banded together and persevered despite extremely difficult conditions to allow the courts to re-open within days of the September 11 attack. For a court system of this magnitude that handles thousands and thousands of criminal and civil cases each day, it was crucial that justice continue to be served. I am enormously proud of the cooperation and tenacity of our court family and the collective response to the tragedy of 9/11.

Among the members of the judicial branch, there was an understanding that safeguarding equal justice and the rule of law is paramount not only for the present generation but also for the next generation and the next. Each anniversary of 9/11 is a time of remembrance and an opportunity to tell our children and grandchildren about the day where our country was bruised but did not buckle in the face of an expression of intense hatred for us and our way of life. Remembrance is why the names of all those who died are etched into the bronze panels surrounding the twin reflecting pools of the September 11 Memorial, and remembrance is why remnants of the stairs that allowed hundreds to escape with their lives are preserved in the September 11 Memorial Museum. Remembrance is why three corners of Leonard, Franklin, and White Streets bear our beloved court officers' names, and remembrance is why a bronze plaque with Harry, Mitch, and Tommy's images hangs in our courthouse at 111 Centre Street. Our pledge is to never forget the great sacrifices made by so many that morning and to confirm our dedication to strengthening and preserving our democracy.

Thank you, and may God bless all of you, the Unified Court System of the State of New York, and the United States of America.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jonathan Leppman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.