

Remarks at the Investiture of Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer



By Alainna R. Mire

At the Investiture of Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer, held at the Louisiana Supreme Court on January 7, 2021, Deacon Dan Borne, master of ceremonies, said: "Now we're going to welcome the Louisiana State Bar Association President Alainna R. Mire. She is an attorney in the city of Alexandria. She received her BA and JD degrees from LSU. She has held virtually every position in the Bar Association before becoming LSBA President, including serving as the Young Lawyers Division chair. She also served as an officer of the Central Louisiana Pro Bono Project, which aids indigent citizens, and as chair of the United Way of Central Louisiana. Ladies and gentleman, the 80th President of the Louisiana State Bar Association . . . Alainna Mire."

I, just like the Governor and the Attorney General, received firm guidelines, or shall I say criteria, before I was able to speak here today. But as the oldest of my parent's three daughters, I will say that I feel like I've always done the right thing. I've tried to do my best. I've tried to follow those guidelines. And so I'll do my best. For people who know me, they know I usually have my phone on me at all times. But if I don't have my cell phone on me, then it's just . . . Somewhere. So one day I finally decided to check it, and I noticed I had a missed call, a voice mail and a text message from Justice Weimer. Inside, my heart ached. I thought, "Uh-oh, what did I do? I didn't do anything!" But I returned the call and we had a lovely conversation and discussed his plans for his investiture. He invited me here today to speak on behalf of the Louisiana State Bar Association.

As we were having our conversation,

I started thinking about the times when I was able to meet a Chief Justice. Prior to Chief Justice Weimer, that would be twice. The first time was when I met Chief Justice Pascal Calogero in October 2004. I believe it was at the New Orleans Civic Center at the time when I was sworn in, as I took my oath as an attorney. Chief Justice Calogero, at the end, spoke to a lot of us who wanted to hang around and just talk to him. He was very nice and kind. That was my first time meeting a justice. He was so kind, and I was very surprised by that because we always think of the justices as people who are on this pedestal and who interpret the laws. We're not sure about what we're asking, what we're doing, if we're doing the right thing, or if it's okay for us to seek their guidance. But they're human, just like all of us.

And so that day Justice Calogero took a picture with me and I was wearing this suit jacket. I was also wearing the skirt, but I did not try to put that on today because, that was 2004, and we're here to talk about a joyous occasion and things that bring us joy. So we're not even going to mention that.

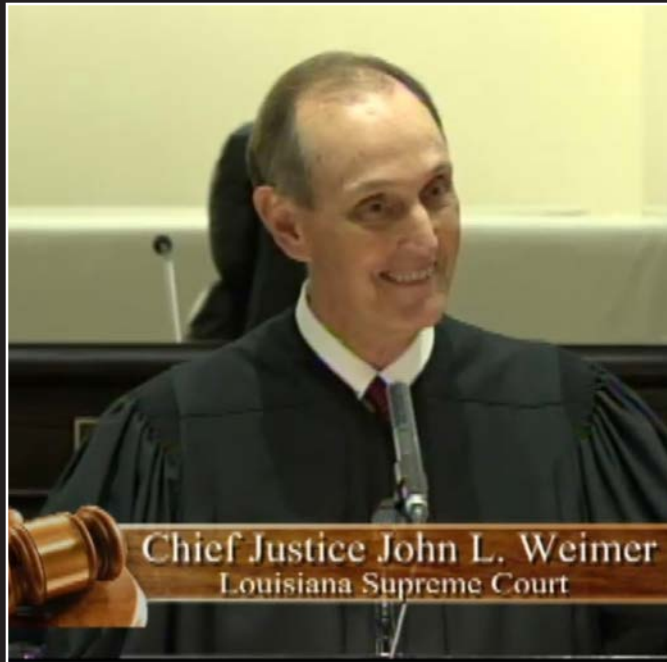
The next Chief Justice I was able to meet was Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson. Then, a few years later, I was able to work with her. Chief Justice Johnson opened up this very courtroom (in the middle of a pandemic) to me so I could be sworn in as the 80th Bar President. I will always thank her for that. I will always remember that kindness and appreciate her and her service.

Now, we're here to celebrate Chief Justice Weimer, although I was told I'm not supposed to say that, but we'll see. During our conversation, we discussed access to justice and Chief Justice

Weimer wants us to continue the work the LSBA is doing to ensure that all citizens have access to the courts. That way, they can have access to justice, whatever that justice looks like for them, because at the time we don't know what it looks like. But they have to have access to the courts in order to do that. That is what he is working on, along with his associate justices, and the LSBA is helping him with that. Of course, the LSBA has its Access to Justice Department, but along with that, we have the Access to Justice Commission, which the Supreme Court plays a very integral role in, and always has a member who sits at our side and co-chairs that Commission, which is very powerful because we have many stakeholders who sit on that Commission. When you see the Court in the room alongside you fighting for the citizens of Louisiana, that's impactful on the people in legal services who are working day in and day out.

We also have the Louisiana Bar Foundation which plays an integral role in our access to justice initiatives, in everything that we do, and who, just as Justice Weimer does, supports the Court. Through that Bar Foundation, they're normally the highest funder of civil legal aid in the state of Louisiana. That's so very important, very powerful because, without the work of our legal aid organizations, there would be so many people who would not have access to the courts and access to the justice that they seek. I would also like to say, since I have in front of me here today members of the Executive branch of government and the Legislature, that I thank you for funding and believing in civil legal aid.

Without that, we couldn't do the things we do to assist our citizens of



Louisiana, especially right now during this pandemic, which is so important. Although I was able to work with Chief Justice Johnson going throughout the end of her tenure, of course, she had to deal with the pandemic. Just as Chief Justice Weimer at the beginning of his tenure and on my way out as Bar President, we're still dealing with the pandemic. There are different issues rising for each justice, but I know that Chief Justice Weimer is going to handle that very well.

I drove in last night from Alexandria because that's about a three-hour drive and I didn't want to do it this morning because you never know about that Baton Rouge traffic. It's kind of tricky and I didn't want to be late.

I was on my way here, and I received a text from a friend that said, "Have you seen the news?" I texted, "No, why?" I turned it on and I saw some things that I never thought I would see. Some things that upset me and that did not bring me joy on January 6. But then I thought about it. You know, we're coming here today to celebrate the investiture of Chief Justice Weimer, who is going to be there. The Attorney General mentioned those three branches of government. They're all here represented today, the executive, the legislative and the judicial. It's not often that you see them in the same room. You do see it in a civics book. You

see a nice little diagram of how it works, but you never really see it function in real life.

The reason we're all here today and that everyone is here represented is because of Chief Justice Weimer and his respect for the rule of law. That is what he is going to keep instilling in everyone, that understanding of the rule of law and how important it is. As lawyers, part of our oath is to uphold the laws of the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of Louisiana. And that is what we're doing here today. We're upholding those laws. Those very important laws.

Chief Justice Weimer also has instilled the mission of the Louisiana State Bar Association at its very core — serving the public and serving the profession. Whether that's through his tenure at Nicholls State University, whether it's through serving in the lower courts or serving as a volunteer in the Thibodaux Fire Department, he served the public. He thinks about the public with everything he does and every decision he makes.

He also serves the legal profession. As the LSBA President, I work very closely with the Court. I've heard my predecessors say that there are others in different jurisdictions that don't have working relationships with their state Supreme

Courts. I found that very odd. And so when I took office, while I haven't been able to really get out and meet most of my colleagues in the different states because of the pandemic, I will say I am shocked by that. We're very fortunate that our Court recognizes that, at the end of the day, we're all lawyers and we're all here to serve the public. And that is what they're doing here today through their public service. We have a wonderful relationship with them and I look forward to continuing that and I know that I will because we've had that discussion.

With that, although I'm not supposed to say that he is the best person suited for the job right now, the position of the Chief Justice is a lot of things. I had no idea, until working with Chief Justice Johnson, of all the different administrative functions that go with that as well. I'm not going to say that he's going to be very well suited for that. That he also may streamline some processes. I'm not going to say that I look forward to it. I'm not going to say that I know he's going to do an amazing job. I'm not going to say any of that. But what I will say is I am honored to be here today and it's my privilege that I get to work with you and I wish you and your family well. Thank you.

