



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Les Fugate
(502) 229-3803

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National Association of Secretaries of State to Honor Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor as 2009 Margaret Chase Smith Award Recipient

State Officials to Recognize O'Connor's Leadership in Addressing Threats to Independence of Judicial Branch of Government

Minneapolis, MN—The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), currently holding its annual summer meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota, today announced that its members have selected retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor as the recipient of its 2009 Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award for acts of political courage. O'Connor, who stepped down from the Supreme Court in 2005, will be recognized for her efforts to combat threats to the judicial independence of federal and state courts.

"In our current climate of destructive partisanship and the increasing number of threats directed at the judges, Justice O'Connor's work in establishing the Our Courts program in conjunction with Georgetown Law is a commendable effort to educate Americans about the importance of an independent judiciary and the need to protect its autonomy," said Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, who nominated O'Connor for the award. "For her tireless work to protect our nation's system of justice, I believe there is no better recipient for this prestigious national award."

NASS established the Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award in tribute to the former U.S. Senator from Maine, who jeopardized her career by speaking out against the red-baiting tactics of Senator Joseph P. McCarthy. Recipients of the award are recognized for similar acts of political courage, uncommon character, and selfless action in the realm of public service.

Past recipients include: John J. Sirica, the chief judge who presided over the Watergate scandal; Morris Dees and Joseph Levin, Jr., co-founders of the Southern Poverty Law Center; former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani; and former U.S. Senator Bob Dole of Kansas.

"Secretaries of state are very concerned about the lack of civic education our students are receiving," said NASS President Trey Grayson of Kentucky. "We are delighted that Justice O'Connor has taken up the important issue of protecting judicial independence as a signature part of her involvement with teaching younger generations about the role of our courts," said NASS President Trey Grayson of Kentucky. "We look forward to presenting her with this award next February at the NASS 2010 Winter Conference in Washington, DC."

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