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Pioneering Judge Elizabeth Robb to Present Commencement Address

March 26, 2015

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Recently retired chief circuit judge Elizabeth Robb will present the address during the Commencement ceremony Sunday, May 3 at 1 p.m. at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The ceremony is scheduled for Kemp Commencement Plaza at State Farm Hall. In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be moved to the Shirk Center for Athletics and Recreation. Graduation exercises will be live streamed and will be available online after the event.

Appointed to the bench in 1993, Robb was the first woman to serve as associate judge, circuit judge and chief judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit that serves Ford, Livingston, Logan, McLean and Woodford counties in Illinois. She served as chief judge for 10 years until her retirement in December 2014.

Robb's pioneering approach to justice has included many innovative programs such as co-founding and chairing the McLean Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, which collaborates with Criminal Justice Partners to improve the criminal justice system in McLean County; obtaining federal and county funding for the creation of the McLean County Drug Court in 2006 and the McLean County Recovery Court in 2010 for defendants with a mental illness; developing the Juvenile Redeploy Illinois program for juvenile offenders; and instituting a pilot program in 2013 for extended media coverage in the courtroom. Robb was elected as Vice Chair of the Conference of Chief Judge, a position she held for 6 years and was elected to serve as the first woman Chair of the Conference in 2014. She previously served for 9 years on the Illinois Judicial Conference, which suggest improvements to the administration of justice in the state. Robb's many judicial appointments included serving as chair of the Judicial Mentor Committee, which oversees the New Judge Mentor Program and the Peer Judge Mentor Program.



Elizabeth Robb '78

Robb remains active in the criminal justice system. She was recently named to serve on the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform, a panel charged with making recommendations to reduce the state's prison population. This statewide panel echoes the local efforts of McLean County's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. She was also named by Governor Bruce Rauner to serve as the Chair of the Board of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Other current judicial appointments include service on the Illinois Courts' Language Access Advisory Board, member of the ARDC Committee on Character & Fitness, the Juvenile Justice Leadership Council, the Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning, and Advisory Board of the Illinois Center for Excellence for Behavioral Health and Justice.

A native of Macomb, Illinois, Robb graduated magna cum laude from Illinois Wesleyan in 1978 with a bachelor of arts degree. She earned her law degree from Loyola University in Chicago in 1981. She practiced law in Bloomington for 11 years before becoming associate circuit judge in 1993.

She also taught business law at Illinois Wesleyan and at Illinois State University. While a judge, she provided internship and mock trial opportunities to Illinois Wesleyan students for more than 20 years. In 2012, Illinois Wesleyan honored Robb as the recipient of the Distinguished Alumna Award for her contributions to society, professional distinction and civic leadership.