

**Suffolk University Law School Commencement**  
**Sunday, May 20, 2018**  
**Blue Hills Bank Pavilion, Boston**  
**Commencement Speaker**  
**Chief Justice (Ret.) Linda Stewart Dalianis**  
**New Hampshire Supreme Court**

Who was that woman?

Thank you, Professor Juliar, Dean Perlman, trustees, distinguished guests, professors and alumni, graduates, family and friends.

The only thing better than being granted a degree from a law school that you love is being asked to return and share some thoughts about what you've learned. If you're not interested in that, you can just think of me as one of your odd aunts that when you wind up at the family party, she wants to give you a lecture. I'm okay with that.

And I'm grateful to be given the opportunity to come here and chat with you today. This is really quite a venue. It certainly beats the old Boston Garden back in 1974, which is where I graduated as excited, optimistic, and enthusiastic as you are, with no clue really about what the future would bring. I thought I knew, but I didn't, and I suspect that some of you feel the same way. And to think I'm here following so many amazing artists who've played this stage, like John Legend, Idina Menzel, somebody called Alabama Shakes, and Goo Goo Dolls. You know you have made it when you get to stand on the same stage as the Goo Goo Dolls. To the Class of 2018, I say congratulations, today is your day. You are the rock stars.

Three or four years of effort, hundreds of lectures and tests and papers. Thank you, Professor Callahan, wherever you are. Professor Callahan was a great professor, Commercial Code not so much. And to this very day, all these years later, I still shudder when somebody says the words, Commercial Code Article 2.

You should be extremely proud of your accomplishment. You started a daunting project and you finished it. Let's not talk about the bar exam. Your journey to your juris doctorate has had many cheerleaders along the way. As much as today is your day, it is their day, too. So we want to acknowledge your parents, your spouses, your partners, loved ones of all kinds, and especially your jealous siblings. We also can't forget to thank Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, your Snapchat filter, and all other forms of time-sucking social media that helped you to get to this point. Kind bartenders, understanding Uber drivers, and late-night pizza deliverers also deserve a place in our thoughts. So many people have been on your team throughout law school, they can't all be counted. They might not have understood the writ of coram nobis or the Rule

against Perpetuities but they were there to comfort you, to keep you on track, to give you a pep talk, to deliver the pizza. We are forever in their debt.

Suffolk Law School holds a special place in my heart because 48 years ago, it gave me my professional start. I was inspired to attend law school because my father needed the help of a lawyer for a business issue, and he got that help. That impressed me. The ability of a lawyer to help people will never stop impressing me. Since I was an evening student -- I think we evening students sometimes are underestimated. But Suffolk instilled in me the values of time management, concentrated focus and the importance of prioritization. And my need to work to get through law school taught me about the world of law firms and the importance of building contacts. All of that and more has stood me in good stead.

There were, of course, many challenges, not least of which was being a female trying to navigate in a then overwhelmingly male profession. But Suffolk taught me perseverance. The practice of law has changed in many ways, both subtle and profound. Yet we have always found ways to adapt. How the practice of law will evolve in the future I cannot begin to guess, but I expect you will all rise to the challenges. No matter what challenges come your way, do not become discouraged.

We lawyers take a lot of criticism. Look at how our profession is under siege right now in the nation's capital. We are called disparaging names. We are not always treated with respect. People tell unkind jokes about us. But do not ever forget that we are an honorable profession. Yes, we are.

I would like to share with you a poem that from the moment I first heard it, left a lasting impact on me. This poem has not often been seen, and I'm guessing not often read, and probably rarely heard. It was published in the very first years of the 20th century, apparently right after its author, an eminent lawyer named Louis Landy, graduated from NYU Law School. By my reckoning, it's more than 100 years old. But it's still as resonant now as it must have been then. I've taken some liberty with it, apologies to Attorney Landy if you're listening, to account for the passage of time, archaic language, and the flight of history. But I think even with my edits, it remains true to the poet's aim. It's called simply "The Lawyer."

*I am the lawyer. I displace brute force with mercy, justice and equality. I teach people to respect the rights of others to their property, to their personal liberty, to freedom of conscience, to free speech, and free assembly. I am the spokesperson of every righteous cause. I plead for the poor, the persecuted, the widowed, and the orphaned. I maintain honor in the marketplace. I am the champion of unpopular causes. I am the foe of tyranny, oppression, and bureaucracy. I wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Rights of Man. I defended the slave, I was the abolitionist. I signed the Emancipation Proclamation. In every land and in every clime, I punish the wicked,*

*protect the innocent, raise up the lowly, and oppose brutality and injustice. I fought in every war for liberty. I stand in the way of public clamor and the tyranny of the majority. I speak for the rich when prejudice prevents justice for them, and I insist that the poor be accorded the same rights and privileges as the rich. I seek the equality of people, regardless of color, gender, or religion. I hate fraud, deceit or trickery. I am the conservative of the past, the liberal of the present, and the radical of the future. I am the leader in every crisis. I am also the scapegoat of the world. I am the pioneer. I am the just judge and the righteous ruler. I hear before I condemn, and I seek the best in everything.*

So, whether you are headed to practice in a big or small law firm, to public service or to a clerkship, Louis Landy laid down some lofty goals for you. And all these years later, they still ring true.

You might believe that as brand-new lawyers, you don't have enough experience to make valuable contributions, but in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. You've already showed that through the various things that your president talked about a few moments ago. You have been trained to be problem solvers and in addition to your practice, you can help build and strengthen nonprofit organizations. You can work in local government. You can advance local causes, and you can improve the health and well-being of your communities. Whenever you can make a difference to your fellow citizens, please seize the opportunity.

Also, be mindful of your reputation, both online and off. A great measure of what people make of you over time will be shaped by what opposing counsel and opposing parties say about you. Inevitably, in the intense crucible of our adversary system, the best and sometimes the worst will come out in you. But when the smoke clears and long after the results of any particular case are forgotten, what will matter most will be what others think of you as a lawyer and as a person. You will be measured based upon your character, the decisions that you have made, and the quality of your judgment. You will not be measured based upon whether your client won or lost.

For me, this is a valedictory of sorts. I retired just last month as the New Hampshire constitution required of me. And this may well be the last major speech that I ever deliver. I keep saying that, but it doesn't actually happen. I think that's fitting. Suffolk Law School set me on my way and Suffolk Law School is seeing me off.

So, to the Class of 2018, from this stage, let your new legal career take flight. Think of it as opening night. Focus on the possibilities. Forget about the critics. I mean if a band called the Goo Goo Dolls can be a huge success, so can you. Congratulations for what you have already accomplished and for what you will achieve in the future. Thank you very much.