

## NEW LAWYERS

Congratulations on your admission to the Nebraska Bar, and welcome to the practice of law in state and federal court.

Thank you for choosing law as your profession, and for devoting years of your life to the study of the law, bringing you to this landmark day. We need your energy, your vision, and your understanding of the evolving American culture.

As you came into the Capitol Building, you passed by the busts of a number of Nebraskans who were lawyers or who used their law degrees to reach the highest levels of distinction in other professions. George W. Norris. John Pershing. William Jennings Bryan. Gilbert Hitchcock. And Roscoe Pound.

You may know that before Roscoe Pound was a lawyer, he was a botanist. When he studied science in the 1880s, the goal of botany was taxonomy—the mere classification of species and subspecies. Then botanists, including Pound, began to read and understand Darwin’s theories. Pound recognized that the study of life was not just about giving things labels and putting them in categories. He saw that life forms interact with each other and with their environment, and they change. He became one of the founders of a new branch of science we now call ecology. These scientific revelations affected his view of the law, and led him to be the founder of sociological jurisprudence. He said, “The law must be stable, but it must not stand still.” Of course, the law *can*’t stand still. The law and the practice of law will continue to change, for better or for worse.

There's another bronze bust you passed today. Willa Cather, the author, understood human nature, including the nature of lawyers. Before you accept your first case as a lawyer, or counsel your first client, I encourage you to read Cather's short story, "The Sculptor's Funeral." It's about a lawyer in a small town. His best friend's body is returned to the town for burial. The lawyer has spent his career representing his clients zealously, but didn't recognize that his clients are three-dimensional people who may have selfish instincts, but who also have the potential for acting honorably, fairly, and even nobly, with kindness and generosity. The lawyer succumbs to his clients' selfish, unethical demands, and ends up hating the practice of law and himself. When the day of his best friend's funeral arrives, the lawyer is too drunk to attend.

No matter what environment you choose for your career, keep in mind that you control your own fate. If you counsel your clients in a manner that appeals to their better angels, they will be happier, and so will you.

As lawyers, you will be conservationists, preserving and protecting the rule of law. And you will be powerful catalysts for change. *You* will determine how the law and the practice of law evolve. How you counsel your clients, how you interact with your fellow lawyers, how you prepare and present yourself in court, and how you take on the mantle of leadership in your community that comes with being a member of the legal profession, all will create small but powerful changes in the genetic structure of the law.

Society is depending on you to help the law and the practice of law continue to evolve into a higher, more noble form of life. Thank you for accepting that mission.

Now, will those applicants who have made application to practice before the U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska please rise.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that as an officer of the United States District Court for the District of Nebraska, you will demean yourself faithfully, uprightly, and according to law, and that you will support, uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, so help you God.