

**REMARKS OF MICHAEL J. MCNAMARA
PRESIDENT, NEW YORK COUNTY LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
AT LAW DAY LUNCHEON
Battery Gardens
New York, New York**

May 18, 2018

Good Afternoon.

It's my privilege to welcome all of you to our Annual Law Day Luncheon, sponsored by the Supreme Court Committee.

This luncheon is always one of the most special events on the NYCLA calendar as we come together to celebrate Law Day.

This year, as always, we are fortunate to have in attendance many, many distinguished state and federal Judges, 55 by last count, and many former Capozzoli Gavel winners.

I'd like to ask all of the state and federal Judges and all the former Capozzoli Gavel winners in the room to please stand so we can thank you for being here today and express our appreciation for all you do every day.

Everyone please join me in a round of applause.

This year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of Law Day and our theme is “Separation of Powers: Framework for Freedom.” James Madison and the other members of the Constitutional Convention correctly believed that by dividing governmental powers among 3 independent branches they would ensure that liberty would be preserved and tyranny would be avoided. Central to that framework and a cornerstone of our democracy these past 229 years is an independent judiciary.

As we celebrate this Law Day, we are enormously grateful to our forefathers for their wisdom and the enduring freedoms we enjoy. But we are also mindful of our obligation, as members of the bar, to ensure that the Judiciary remains independent and strong and to act when that independence is challenged. As former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor has observed: “Judicial independence doesn’t happen all by itself. It’s

tremendously hard to create, and easier than most people imagine to destroy.”

As we look around the world we see many examples of countries, Hungary and Poland to name but two, where judicial independence is under attack and the rule of law is being threatened.

I am proud to say that NYCLA has always taken its obligation to protect the judiciary from unfair attacks and encroachments seriously, that we will continue to do so and we will work with our sister bar associations to ensure judicial independence is preserved everywhere.

Now a brief word about today’s Award and our honoree.

For the past 35 years, NYCLA has celebrated Law Day with the presentation of the Capozzoli Gavel which honors the memory of the late Judge Louis J. Capozzoli. During his illustrious career, Judge Capozzoli was a prosecutor, an elected official serving first in the State Assembly and later

in the U.S. House of Representatives and a highly-respected trial and appellate court Judge.

This year we proudly present the Capozzoli Gavel to the Honorable Rolando Acosta, the Presiding Justice of the First Department for his exceptional contributions to our profession and the system of justice.

Many of you know Judge Acosta and are familiar with his record of judicial excellence and, of course, you will be hearing more about him later.

But those of us who went to Columbia College know that before he was an award-winning jurist, Judge Acosta was an award-winning pitcher for the Columbia Lions. In fact, if you check his Wikipedia entry, you will find a long and very impressive list of awards he received and pitching records he still holds, all of which culminated in his induction to the Columbia University Hall of Fame in October 2008.

As a member of the Columbia College Class of 1980 and thus one of Judge Acosta's classmates, I am especially delighted to be here today to see him add the prestigious Capozzoli Gavel to his collection of awards.

Congratulations Judge Acosta.

Finally, events like this luncheon don't just happen, they involve a lot of effort by many people and so please join me in thanking the Co-chairs of the Supreme Court Committee, Craig Kesch and Tom Fini, for their efforts in organizing this event and the outstanding NYCLA staff led by Sophia Gianacoplos for all of their efforts in making the luncheon a great success.

Now I'm going to turn the program back over to Craig Kesch.

Thank you for coming and please enjoy lunch and the rest of the program.