

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009*

## **Remarks on the Retirement of Supreme Court Justice David Souter**

*May 1, 2009*

I just got off the telephone with Justice Souter, and so I would like to say a few words about his decision to retire from the Supreme Court.

Throughout his two decades on the Supreme Court, Justice Souter has shown what it means to be a fair-minded and independent judge. He came to the bench with no particular ideology. He never sought to promote a political agenda, and he consistently defied labels and rejected absolutes, focusing instead on just one task: reaching a just result in the case that was before him.

He approached judging as he approaches life, with a feverish work ethic and a good sense of humor, with integrity, equanimity, and compassion, the hallmark of not just being a good judge, but of being a good person.

I am incredibly grateful for his dedicated service. I told him as much when we spoke. I spoke on behalf of the American people, thanking him for his service. And I wish him safe travels on his journey home to his beloved New Hampshire and on the road ahead.

Now, the process of selecting someone to replace Justice Souter is among my most serious responsibilities as President, so I will seek somebody with a sharp and independent mind and a record of excellence and integrity. I will seek someone who understands that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory or footnote in a casebook; it is also about how our laws affect the daily realities of people's lives, whether they can make a living and care for their families, whether they feel safe in their homes and welcomed in their own nation.

I view that quality of empathy, of understanding and identifying with people's hopes and struggles, as an essential ingredient for arriving at just decisions and outcomes. I will seek somebody who is dedicated to the rule of law, who honors our constitutional traditions, who respects the integrity of the judicial process and the appropriate limits of the judicial role. I will seek somebody who shares my respect for constitutional values on which this Nation was founded and who brings a thoughtful understanding of how to apply them in our time.

As I make this decision, I intend to consult with members of both parties across the political spectrum. And it is my hope that we can swear in our new Supreme Court Justice in time for him or her to be seated by the first Monday in October when the Court's new term begins.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:04 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Supreme Court Associate Justice David Souter, retirement.

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