

His decisions and opinions show respect for due process and strict adherence to the law. Justice Hill is a mentor and inspiration to Wyoming's legal community. He enjoys sharing his experiences and his passion for the legal profession with students and individuals just entering the legal field.

Justice Hill earned a reputation for being a hard worker and a thorough decisionmaker. Anyone fortunate enough to work with him speaks highly of his character and his drive. He respects the rule of law and our foundational legal principles. Justice Hill has consistently shown his commitment to justice and upholding the Constitution.

He has also been a recipient of several prestigious honors throughout his successful career. In 2017, he received the Larry L. Lehman Award for Judicial Excellence presented by the Wyoming State Bar. The award is named in honor of Justice Lehman for his efforts to improve the operation of the Wyoming court system and to provide greater access to justice for all Wyoming citizens. Justice Hill was also inducted as an honorary member of the University of Wyoming's Order of the Coif in 2011.

Justice Hill is married to Mary Kay Hill, and they have two children: Brian and Erin. Their son Brian Hill is married to Molly Hill. Their daughter Erin is married to Chase Rutherford. Mary Kay Hill worked for U.S. Senator Al Simpson in Washington, DC, for 10 years before returning to Wyoming as a policy adviser for former Governor Geringer and current Governor Mead.

The law plays such a major role in Justice Hill's life that he even plays guitar in a band called The Law North of Crow Creek. He is a man of many talents and can captivate a room with his stories. He leaves a lasting mark on everyone he meets.

Retirement opens the door to a new world of adventure and happiness. Justice Hill will continue to inspire and touch the lives of the people of Wyoming for years to come.

It is a great honor to recognize this exceptional member of our Wyoming community. My wife, Bobbi, joins me in extending our gratitude and well wishes to Justice Hill on his retirement. ●

REMEMBERING ELDER VON G. KEETCH

● Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I would like to honor the memory of a dear mentor and friend, Elder Von G. Keetch, who passed away suddenly on January 26 at the age of 57.

Elder Keetch was a brilliant attorney who used his gifts in the service of God.

As chief outside counsel and public affairs director to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder Keetch had the immense responsibility of representing his faith in the public square.

As an ardent supporter of religious freedom, he also had the privilege of

defending others' ability to worship according to the dictates of their conscience.

"Religious liberty is a God-given right," Elder Keetch said. "It is essential to all men and women exercising their agency and learning to choose between right and wrong."

Elder Keetch had deep respect for our constitutional rights because of his profession, but as a man of faith, he knew that conversions of the heart occur through personal encounters.

Mindful of this truth, Elder Keetch strove to imitate Jesus Christ in all aspects of his life. He encouraged his fellow Christians to do the same, even during contentious public debates.

"Ask yourself how you can best teach and defend the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ while also showing love, kindness, and understanding," he wrote.

Elder Keetch was born in Provo and lived for much of his life in Utah.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and his law degree from BYU's law school.

During this period, he clerked at the Supreme Court for Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justice Antonin Scalia, where he worked on pivotal religious liberty cases such as *Employment Division v. Speech*, 1990.

As he came up through the ranks, Elder Keetch caught the attention of prominent legal minds, including my father, Rex Lee, who mentored him during law school.

Years later, Elder Keetch would return the favor by mentoring another young BYU law student—me.

I still remember the enthusiasm that Elder Keetch brought to his class on the First Amendment. He wanted to impress upon his students the importance of these old court decisions to our lives.

At least in my case—and I am sure in countless others—he succeeded.

After Elder Keetch graduated from law school, he could have worked at his choice of law firms in Washington, DC, or New York. Instead, after prayerful consideration, he returned to Utah to work at Kirton McConkie, a law firm that works closely with the LDS Church.

Soon, Elder Keetch was an advocate in some of the highest profile public debates of our time, defending religious liberty against coercion and the institution of marriage against attempts to redefine it.

At the same time, Elder Keetch was called to positions of leadership within the LDS Church. He was sustained as a General Authority Seventy of the Church on April 4, 2015.

So tireless was Elder Keetch that, when he was called to a full-time position in the LDS Church, two attorneys were assigned to take over his work.

In spite of these important and time-consuming responsibilities, Elder Keetch made family his first priority.

Elder Keetch is survived by six children and his wife, Bernice, who has

been his steady companion and sweetheart since she invited him to a dance in high school. His family surrounded him with love as he battled cancer, the illness that eventually took him away from us.

It is hard to grapple with the unexpected death of a mentor, father, husband, and leader like Elder Von Keetch, but we should take heart from words that Elder Keetch himself spoke before a General Conference audience in 2015.

He said that trials were to be expected if we want to follow the One who suffered for us on Calvary.

We represent the love and faith of Christ, Elder Keetch taught, "in situations where we don't fully understand the reason for God's command."

I don't know why my dear friend and mentor was called home so soon, but I can take inspiration from his spectacular life.

I still recall a phone conversation with Elder Keetch many years ago, when I was finishing a clerkship with then-Judge Samuel Alito.

Elder Keetch was by then a prominent attorney. By contrast, I was a kid fresh out of school looking for life advice.

Still, he took my call, listened with great care and attention, and gave wise counsel that served me well down the line. Undoubtedly, Elder Keetch's time could have been spent better elsewhere, yet he chose to spend it on me.

That is what I will remember about Elder Keetch. He brought the same enthusiasm to pivotal court cases and seemingly unimportant phone conversations. He knew that matters large and small can be used for the glory of God.

In all things, Elder Von Keetch modeled the words of Paul in his letter to the Philippians: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain," Philippians 1:21–23, KJV. ●

STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY FINALISTS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, last week I entered into the RECORD the winning essays in my office's eighth annual State of the Union Essay Contest. I would like to congratulate the other finalists in this year's contest and likewise ask that their essays be printed in the RECORD. The essays follow, in alphabetical order according to the finalists' names.

The material follows:

BAILEY BLOW, SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, FINALIST

At the beginning of December, a video of a polar bear was posted on Twitter by "National Geographic." When people think of polar bears, they imagine snow and ice; however, in this video, snow and ice were nowhere to be found. There was only green. Polar bears are also known for their massive size. The polar bear from the video did not look massive or strong. This poor bear was weak and dangerously skinny. It could barely walk. Without snow and ice, there wasn't a food source for the bear to eat. The scientists that captured the video believed that