



Court of Appeals

360 Democrat Drive
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
502-573-7920

Joy A. Kramer
Chief Judge

www.courts.ky.gov

Court of Appeals Judge Robert G. Johnson Investiture Remarks

Formal Investiture Ceremony
Monday, May 8, 2017
Robert F. Stephens Circuit Courthouse, Courtroom I
Lexington, Kentucky

Good afternoon! As I look out and see so many people who mean so much to me, I know I would not be here today without your love and support. Thank you, Governor Matt Bevin, for appointing me to this office. Thank you also to his general counsel, Stephen Pitt, and his deputy general counsel, Chad Meredith, who interviewed me for this appointment and shared their thoughts with the governor. I also appreciate the work of the judicial nominating commission – which was chaired by Chief Justice John D. Minton.

When I first began thinking about being an attorney in high school, I never once thought that one day I would be standing in a courtroom like this, with a United States Congressman, the state Agriculture Commissioner, and the state senate majority leader observing in attendance, as I take the oath of office to a seat on the Kentucky Court of Appeals, from a Justice of the Supreme Court – thank you Congressman Andy Barr, Commissioner Ryan Quarles, Senator Damon Thayer, and Justice Larry VanMeter for being here today. Thanks also to Justice Michelle Keller for being here.

Next, I appreciate my fellow judges on the Kentucky Court of Appeals for being here today – Chief Judge Joy Kramer, Judge Glenn Acree, Judge Denise Clayton, Judge Sara Combs, Judge Irv Maze, Judge Debra Lambert, Judge Shea Nickell, and Judge Jeff Taylor. It means a lot that you would travel from across the state to make this occasion even more special. Thank you, Rebecca, for marrying me almost a quarter of a century ago, despite my faults, and being so supportive of my dreams and opportunities. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for giving me a wonderful childhood and in many ways making me who I am today. I also want to recognize my children, Benjamin, Sam, Caleb, Hannah, and Beth, for being such wonderful gifts from God. Benjamin is unable to be here today as he is serving our country as a cadet in the United States Air Force Academy. Finally, I want to acknowledge my Lord and Savior, who has blessed me beyond measure, and whom I would continue to trust and follow, regardless of my circumstances. There are numerous other people I should be naming, Jimmy Bevins for help in the appointment process, Don Paris for being a great mentor as I started practicing law, my law clerks and staff attorneys, my administrative assistants, and the numerous attorneys that have appeared before me who have made me a better judge, and thank you to the Fayette

County Bar Association for hosting the reception after we get done here.

I am humbled by this opportunity and pledge to you that I will continue to be a faithful servant of the United States Constitution, the Kentucky Constitution, and each of their laws. Our country was founded upon the necessity for a balance of power so that its citizens would be free from unnecessary and unreasonable intrusion into their lives. My job as judge, especially one of twenty-one judges whose rulings have statewide impact, is to protect that balance of power, so that the executive branch can administrate, the legislative branch can legislate and the judicial branch can adjudicate – all within the powers granted by our constitutions. One of my favorite movies of all time, as my kids know because I used to make them watch it with me about once a year, is *The Patriot*. One of several thought provoking scenes from that movie is when Benjamin Martin, played by Mel Gibson, votes to try to keep South Carolina out of the war effort and says, “Why should I trade one tyrant 3,000 miles away for 3,000 tyrants one mile away?” My promise to you today is not to be one of those tyrants, by making sure that litigants receive justice under the law.

As I was contemplating applying for this position and accepting the governor’s appointment, a few people asked me, mainly my 97-year old grandmother, Margaret Johnson, why would you trade in six more years on your current circuit court term and a seemingly safe position, to fill a position for 1 ½ years and a possible election much sooner. I had to stop to think about that. Ultimately, my decision was made in contemplation of one of my favorite Bible verses, Luke 12:48, which says, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” For twelve years, the people of Bourbon, Scott and Woodford counties allowed me to serve them as their Circuit Judge. During that time, I learned the value of listening to the litigants and their attorneys, that cases are not nameless or faceless, that without confidence in our courts the community will suffer, that failure to apply the law correctly and consistently can cause that lack of confidence, that there is accountability under the law, but in criminal cases that accountability can be tamed with mercy, depending upon the circumstances, and that judges are imperfect, but should strive daily to seek wisdom.

Thank you for being here this afternoon, your presence means a great deal to me and I look forward to speaking to each of you at the reception down on the first floor in the multi-purpose room after the benediction. Thank you.

###