

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Justice Karen Valihura delivers commencement address  
at Hempfield Area High School, her alma mater**

Delaware Supreme Court Justice Karen Knox Valihura delivered a commencement address at Hempfield Area High School in Greensburg, PA on Friday June 4, 2021.

Justice Valihura graduated from Hempfield High as a member of the Class of 1981 and her appearance at the school was almost exactly 40 years to the day when she graduated. She opened her remarks to the 430 members of the Class of '21 at Spartan Stadium by thanking them for welcoming her back home.

Justice Valihura was born and raised in Greensburg and still has family in the area. On Friday, the school, which is in suburban Western Pennsylvania and has a student population of about 1,800, also added Justice Valihura to its "Wall of Fame." She is now the 30<sup>th</sup> addition to the wall, which was established in 1997.

In her remarks, Justice Valihura acknowledged the unique difficulties that the graduates both at Hempfield and all across the nation faced during this past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "Like no other graduating class in recent history, Class of 2021, you have climbed a mountain of adversity together and now stand victorious at the summit," she said. "The fact is that you never know what you can handle in life unless and until you are tested. ... But now, having faced such a formidable challenge, you know. ... You have gained that very valuable self-knowledge and wisdom – the kind that builds the resiliency and patience that will better enable you to face your next challenge and to ascend to even greater heights."

While attending Hempfield High, Justice Valihura was in the marching, stage and concert bands, and she cited the school's music and band director, Dr. Roderick Booker, who is now retired but attended the commencement, as a great mentor and influence on her life. "I was, like you, a student right here, took many of the same classes, played in the band, and sat in those chairs," she said, "I believe great things are possible for you just like they were possible for me."

After graduating from Hempfield High, Justice Valihura went on to graduate from Washington and Jefferson College and then earn her law degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. In private practice as an attorney, she focused on complex commercial and corporate issues at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, LLP, where she rose to become a partner. Then in 2014, she was nominated by Gov. Jack Markell to serve on the Delaware Supreme Court and upon her confirmation by the Delaware Senate, became the second woman to serve on the state's highest court.

Justice Valihura, who spoke at her own graduation in 1981, ended her speech Friday the same way she ended her speech 40 years earlier, by quoting the poem *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost:

*“I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence;  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”*