FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Delaware Supreme Court marks 75th Anniversary with Gala Dinner

With Guest Retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer

On June 4, 2026, the Delaware Supreme Court, retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, current and retired justices, judges, and the legal community gathered at the Hotel DuPont in Wilmington to mark 75 years since the court's founding in 1951.

Following a reception, Delaware Supreme Court Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. welcomed the audience of more than 300 to the event. "While some might say our court is somewhat young at 75, it is rich in history and judicial precedent helping us set our course as we look to the future,"

Following the Chief Justice's welcome, Delaware Governor Matt Meyer also offered remarks.

After dinner, the Supreme Court premiered a 20-minute video featuring interviews with the four most recent Chief Justices – Seitz and former Chief Justices Leo E. Strine, Jr., Myron T. Steele, and E. Norman Veasey. Also appearing in the video were Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings, Delaware Chief Defender Kevin O'Connell, State Senate Majority Leader and Delaware attorney Bryan Townsend, Delaware attorney David C. McBride, and Lawrence Cunningham, Presiding Director of the University of Delaware's Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance.

The evening concluded with a fireside chat between Chief Justice Seitz and Justice Breyer for a wide-ranging conversation on the law, civics education, artificial intelligence, civility, and the art of being an attorney. In addition to his service as an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States from 1994 to 2022, Justice Breyer served as the Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, Chief Counsel to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and as an Assistant Watergate Special Prosecutor.

Although Delaware is the First State, it was the last to adopt a separate state supreme court. At the state's founding in 1776, Delaware initially kept the British Common Law and Court system with a separate Court of Appeals, that acted like our modern Supreme Court. In 1792, that system was replaced by a new "High Court of Errors and Appeals." This court was made up of existing trial court judges who would sit as needed to hear appeals (often called the 'leftover judge' system because the appeals court would be made up of judges who did not hear the original case or the 'leftovers,'). A version of this system, renamed "the Supreme Court" in 1897, would remain in place for the next 159 years.

In 1931, the General Assembly drafted legislation to create a separate court of appeals with its own judges. However, it would take until 1951 for the Legislature to finally approve that constitutional amendment to create the modern Delaware Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court celebrates its “birthday” on June 5, 1951, as that was the day that the first three justices (later expanded to five) were sworn into office. The first three members of the state’s new high court were Chief Justice Clarence A. Southerland, Justice James M. Tunnell, Jr. and Justice Daniel F. Wolcott. The current Supreme Court is composed of Chief Justice Seitz and Justices Karen L. Valihura, Gary F. Traynor, Abigail M. LeGrow, and N. Christopher Griffiths.