



NORTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of the COURTS

Office of the Director
Judge John W. Smith
Director

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March 2, 2015

To Everyone in the Judicial Branch,

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:”

When Chief Justice Sarah Parker asked me to take this position as Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts in 2008, I knew it would be an honor, as well as interesting and challenging. It has been all of that and more. But I had no idea how rewarding it would be. Working with you and with those who have preceded me along this path has been a highlight of my professional and personal life.

I know of few other jobs that allow a person to make a difference the way serving as the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts does. Nobody can change the world alone. But together, working within a system that is both collaborative and adversarial, we can all take some satisfaction that we have indeed helped the Judicial Branch survive the most severe economic challenge since the Great Depression. As we emerge from those dark days, it is time for change in so many ways. While I would like to be a part of what I now foresee as a general recovery, it is unavoidable to recognize that this is my sixth year of service in this capacity. Before that, I spent 20 years as a trial judge, and I am now beyond 40 years of service within the Judicial Branch. As the Preacher says: for everything there is a season. I have seen our judicial system from many perspectives: as a young lawyer just coming out of the military, as a defense attorney in private practice here in Raleigh, as a prosecutor down in New Hanover and Pender counties, then as a district court and superior court judge, and now as Director of the administrative office serving two chief justices. What more could a citizen coming off a Moore County land-grant farm ask.

I owe so much to so many it would be futile to try to be all inclusive. Working with an extraordinary staff and with so many of the finest public servants in the country has sustained me. We have had moments of challenge and sharp debate, but in the end we all have pulled together for the good of the people of our great state. We have resisted pressures where yielding would have been betrayal. We have joined forces with others seeking to do good. I owe each of you a debt of gratitude that I know I can never repay other than by trying to leave the position in a way that assures stability. I believe I have done that, and I know that the people of our great state are in good hands. I wish to especially thank former Chief Justice Sarah Parker and current Chief Justice Mark Martin for the opportunity to serve in this position; both are now personal friends. We are all fortunate to have men and women of their character and leadership at the helm.

My retirement will be effective May 1, 2015. It is with gratitude in my heart that I say thank you to every public official and every employee of the Judicial Branch. It has been an honor to work with you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John W. Smith", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

John W. Smith