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ANTHONY W. CROWELL

## In Memoriam: The Honorable Robert A. Katzmann

66 N.Y.L. SCH. L. REV. 71 (2021–2022)

EDITOR'S NOTE: These remarks were adapted from Anthony W. Crowell, *Statement on the Passing of the Honorable Robert A. Katzmann, Former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit*, *News*, N.Y.L. SCH. (June 10, 2021), <https://news.nyls.edu/statement-on-the-passing-of-the-honorable-robert-a-katzmann-former-chief-judge-of-the-u-s-court-of-appeals-for-the-second-circuit/>.

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## IN MEMORIAM: THE HONORABLE ROBERT A. KATZMANN

On June 9, 2021, our nation, the entire legal profession, and the New York Law School community lost a cherished and extraordinary jurist in the Honorable Robert A. Katzmann, former chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. His historic impact extended far beyond the courtroom, and to our law school, and me personally, he was a dedicated and dear friend. We are privileged to feature his eloquent and meaningful remarks from a remarkable day, when our campus hosted Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in this Issue of the *New York Law School Law Review*.

Judge Katzmann was nominated and confirmed to the Second Circuit in 1999. He became chief judge in September 2013, serving until August 2020, and he took senior status in January 2021. The breadth of Judge Katzmann's leadership and professional accomplishments is remarkable, and befitting his unmatched intelligence, curiosity, knowledge, kindness, and compassion. He led the Second Circuit through immense organizational challenges, and guided the court through cases with the highest stakes imaginable. Before his judicial appointment, he was renowned nationally for his scholarly expertise and understanding of the judiciary's relationship to the legislative branch. As a result, in 1993, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) tasked him with serving as counselor to Justice Ginsburg as she went through the confirmation process for appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court, and they became close friends until her passing in September 2020.

Judge Katzmann's legacy is felt deeply on a local and national scale, and especially at our law school. Unique among judicial figures of his stature and responsibilities, he provided transformational leadership on legal representation for immigrants and revitalized civics education. He expanded access to justice by leading the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, the first-of-its-kind government-funded effort to aid undocumented immigrants with legal representation.<sup>1</sup> He also established the Immigrant Justice Corps, through which recent law graduates, including many NYLS graduates, have provided critical representation to undocumented immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

Judge Katzmann was an inspiration for our immigration law students and faculty, and for our close partner, the Safe Passage Project.<sup>3</sup> We were also honored to have his leadership and guidance in one of our most recent efforts, furthering interfaith understanding in the legal system in partnership with the Interfaith Center of New York,<sup>4</sup> led by Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer, daughter of Justice Stephen Breyer. In October 2020, Judge Katzmann spoke virtually at one of the key programs of our partnership with the Interfaith Center, despite the daunting health challenges he was facing privately. In honor of his unmatched commitment to inclusion and access to justice, and

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1. *New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, Impact Litigation, News*, BRONX DEFS., <https://www.bronxdefenders.org/programs/new-york-immigrant-family-unity-project/> (last visited Apr. 15, 2022).

2. *Our Story, About IJC*, IMMIGRANT JUST. CORPS, <https://justicecorps.org/about/> (last visited Apr. 15, 2022).

3. *About Us*, SAFE PASSAGE PROJECT, <https://www.safepassageproject.org/about-us/> (last visited Apr. 15, 2022).

4. *About ICNY, About*, INTERFAITH CTR. OF N.Y., <https://interfaithcenter.org/about-icny/> (last visited Apr. 15, 2022).

what he has meant to our law school, one year after his passing this June, we are planning to hold the first annual Robert A. Katzmann Lecture with the Interfaith Center.<sup>5</sup>

Judge Katzmann turned his deep concern for the lack of civics instruction in our nation's classrooms into action, creating Justice for All: Courts and the Community, an educational program operating out of the Second Circuit.<sup>6</sup> Through the program, teachers and students visited courtrooms throughout the Second Circuit and participated in a variety of activities to deepen their understanding of our nation's core civic responsibilities and bring those lessons back to their schools. The program remains a success today. His concerns have mirrored my own on the erosion of civics and the institutions that underpin our democracy. His unique and extensive efforts act as a guiding light for me personally in my own efforts to boost civic instruction in institutions of higher education.

Our School treasured his longstanding friendship, and we were honored to share with him many of our most historic moments during the past decade. We had the privilege of awarding him an honorary degree and hosting him as the keynote speaker for our 2016 Commencement. He served as our School's emissary and host as we welcomed two sitting U.S. Supreme Court Justices and close friends of his: Justice Ginsburg during our 2018 Shainwald Lecture, and Justice Breyer when he received an honorary degree and spoke at our 2018 Commencement. In Judge Katzmann's introductions of these two historic jurists, his deep affection, respect, and admiration for their roles in safeguarding our democracy was powerfully resonant. He always answered our call, and went above and beyond with his time and thoughtful remarks.

Judge Katzmann displayed such uncommon humility, kindness, and generosity in all interactions, and added wisdom and warmth whenever he came to campus. He serves as an example to every current and future member of our profession. He reminds us of what our mission is and must be, and that the most satisfying individual success comes from a focus on serving others.

I am grateful to have considered him a personal friend and role model, and I have taken many lessons from him. His advice made me a better dean and he represented the values our law school community holds dear. His recognition of NYLS's mission and appreciation of our history provided us with new inspiration and opportunities for our community. He had an unwavering belief in the role of our judiciary to be stewards to the public beyond the courtroom. His commitment and tireless work to strengthen our institutions and deepen our civic engagement feel especially resonant and vital today and makes us miss him that much more. We know his legacy will continue for generations to come, and he has set an exceptionally high standard for the entire judiciary, the legal profession, and every American. Our nation is better for his leadership and guidance, and we are eternally grateful.

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5. The lecture, along with our partnership with the Interfaith Center, is made possible by the generosity of Arthur and Diane Abbey, who together conceived of the lecture to honor Judge Katzmann after his death.

6. *Justice for All: Courts and the Community Initiative*, JUST. FOR ALL, <https://justiceforall.ca2.uscourts.gov/> (last visited Apr. 15, 2022).