When I served as president of the Kansas Bar Association, I had the opportunity to meet and work with some extraordinary people, including the late Chief Justice Robert E. Davis of the Kansas Supreme Court. At the Wichita Judges Appreciation Dinner in 2009, we discovered a shared “mutual interest in maintaining the high standards we have come to enjoy from the members of the Kansas Bar.” Shortly thereafter, the Chief Justice wrote to tell me about a professionalism project undertaken in Virginia that had recently been featured in the American Inns of Court’s magazine, The Bench. He asked whether the KBA might be interested in pursuing a similar initiative. I assured him that the KBA would take on the project, which became the “Pillars of Professionalism,” an inspirational and aspirational set of principles to guide Kansas lawyers.

In the fall of 2009, to manage the project, the KBA formed the Commission for Professionalism and invited participation. The commission was comprised of an impressive and diverse group of lawyers and judges from across the state.†

In March 2010, the Commission met for the first time at the Kansas Judicial Center and began its work. In August 2011, the Commission, led by Judge Fleming and co-chaired by me, began formulating the pillars. Thomas E. Spahn, of McGuire Woods LLP and chair of the Virginia Bar Association’s Commission on Professionalism, traveled to Kansas to discuss how Virginia developed and implemented its project.‡ Then in late 2011, after numerous conference calls and emails, the Commission circulated a draft of the pillars among its members. In January 2012, the group met in person to edit the document. The editing process, like sausage making, although not pretty, resulted in a great product. After a few more tweaks, the final version was presented to the KBA Board of Governors and adopted at the annual meeting on June 15, 2012. The Kansas Supreme Court issued its Order adopting the pillars on September 28, 2012. On October 19, 2012, the U.S. District and Bankruptcy Courts for the District of Kansas also adopted the Pillars. Copies of the courts’ orders are included here.

The pillars are dedicated to Chief Justice Davis, who sparked this work. Chief Justice Davis had a rich and distinguished career. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Creighton University and his law degree from Georgetown. After serving in the military as a JAG captain, he practiced with his father, a well-respected lawyer, in Leavenworth from 1967-84. He served as a magistrate judge from 1969-76. Chief Justice Davis was the Leavenworth County Attorney from 1981-84. He was appointed to the District Court bench in 1984 and to the Kansas Court of Appeals in 1986. In 1993, he was elevated to the Kansas Supreme Court and became the Chief Justice in January 2009. He served on the court until one day before his death on August 4, 2010.

The pillars ask Kansas lawyers to give back to the community through pro bono, civic or charitable involvement, mentoring or other public service. Chief Justice Davis lived this aspiration. He was a director of the Leavenworth Historical Society from 1970-75 and general counsel and member of the board of directors of Leavenworth National Bank and Trust Company from 1972-84. He was a member of the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Alcoholism and chairman of the board at St. John’s Hospital in Leavenworth from 1980-84. He served as president of the Leavenworth County Community Corrections Board from 1980-1984 and was active in the Judge Hugh Means American Inn of Court in Lawrence, serving as its counselor, president-elect and from 1998-2000 as president.

With his passing came tributes. Gov. Mark Parkinson issued the following statement upon hearing about the Chief Justice’s death: “Late Wednesday night, Kansas lost a great jurist with the death of Chief Justice Bob Davis. He was a brilliant but humble man who passionately advocated his positions, without ever being argumentative. But Chief Justice Davis was much more than a great judge. He made every person he encountered, regardless of their relative stature in the world, feel like they were the most important person he had ever met. Kansas didn’t just lose a brilliant justice on Wednesday night; we lost a great man and a true Kansan.” Speaking from personal experience, I can tell you that the Chief Justice had the same impact upon me: the Chief made me feel very important when we talked about this project.

The Chief Justice, as noted above and by all accounts, was a model of professionalism and civility. Mike Crow, a fellow Leavenworth lawyer, tells that when Chief Justice Davis was a magistrate judge, he treated all litigants with the same amount of respect and fairness as he treated litigants and lawyers when

Footnotes
2. Special thanks are due to Tom Spahn. Mr. Spahn planned two visits to Kansas, though the first one was cancelled because of a Kansas blizzard. As noted, he did make it to Kansas to present Virginia’s Pillars, as well as provide advice about drafting and implementation. His input and guidance helped tremendously. Another member of the Virginia Commission, Irving M. Blank, provided much-appreciated insight, most notably at the Southern Conference of Bar Presidents Meeting, which the KBA hosted by in October 2009.
he was on the Supreme Court. No matter what the ruling, the
litigants and lawyers always felt as if justice had been done and
that the system had worked as well as it could, according to
Crow. He was a great lawyer, a great judge and an even better
person.

Chief Justice Davis modeled the tenets of the Pillars of
Professionalism in his long and storied career. It is with great
pride that the KBA dedicates these aspirational goals to Chief
Justice Robert E. Davis.

About the Author

Timothy M. O’Brien has been the clerk of the U.S. District
for the District of Kansas since 2008. Prior to the that, he prac-
ticed law and was a partner at the Shook, Hardy & Bacon law firm in Overland Park
and Kansas City, Mo. He graduated from the
University of Kansas in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts degree and then the University
of Kansas School of Law in 1983, where he
was an associate editor of the Kansas Law Review. O’Brien has served on the board of
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tion, Johnson County Bar Foundation, Johnson County Devel-
opmental Supports, and the Kansas Bar Association, where he
served as president in 2009.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
AND
IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS

IN THE MATTER OF THE KANSAS BAR ASSOCIATION’S
PILLARS OF PROFESSIONALISM
MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is pending before the District and Bankruptcy Courts of the District of Kansas on the recommendation
of the Court’s Bench Bar Committee’s Rule 1 Working Group on Professionalism and Sanctions and affirmed by the
District Court’s Bench-Bar Committee to “adopt” the Kansas Bar Association’s “Pillars of Professionalism.”

The “Pillars of Professionalism” were suggested to the Kansas Bar Association by the late Kansas Supreme Court Chief
Justice Robert E. Davis as a means of providing an inspirational and aspirational set of guidelines for lawyers across
the State of Kansas. The Kansas Bar Association appointed a Commission on Professionalism and the Bar composed of
lawyers and judges from around the state. This group worked over months to draft these goals. After consideration, the
Board of Governors of the Kansas Bar Association approved and adopted the “Pillars of Professionalism” at their annual
meeting on June 15, 2012. Subsequently, the Kansas Supreme Court issued an order on September 28, 2012 adopting
the aspirational goals contained in the Pillars.

The District and Bankruptcy Courts have considered the recommendation of the Rule 1 Working Group and adopt
the attached “Pillars of Professionalism” as aspirational goals to guide lawyers in their pursuit of civility, professionalism
and service to the public.

IT IS SO ORDERED. The Clerks of the respective courts are directed to file this Memorandum and Order as a
permanent record of the court and publicize it on the courts’ website or otherwise publish at the Court’s discretion.

DATED this 19th day of October, 2012.

s/ Kathryn H. Vratil
KATHRYN H. VRATIL
Chief District Judge

s/ Robert E. Nugent
ROBERT E. NUGENT
Chief Bankruptcy Judge