

Introduction of Professor S. Elizabeth Gibson, winner of the Distinguished Service Award.
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March 20, 2026

Good evening. What an honor to be part of the hottest ticket in San Antonio. Relatively few people are on this stage right now. Picture it, instead, as packed with people from side to side, front to back. In introducing Elizabeth tonight, I represent at least that many people, a crowd of Elizabeth appreciators. The nomination, compiled without Elizabeth's knowledge, has the heft of a dossier or even the Bankruptcy Code, although more uplifting and accessible.

Fans of Elizabeth are not necessarily aligned on doctrine or policy but are in full agreement on this: Elizabeth's enduring contributions to bankruptcy law and procedure, the judiciary, and the legal profession more generally, warrant maximum celebration.

Elizabeth's admirers include many *past* winners of the Distinguished Service Award. A leading scholar, for example, who has characterized Elizabeth's scholarship as "the gold standard." Supporters include federal judges from around the country, including circuit and district judges whose deep trust in Elizabeth has benefitted the field more generally. Elizabeth's former law students attest to being inspired by her to join this field, as well as into lifelong investments in professional and public service. Among them are six (and counting) former students who have been selected to serve as federal bankruptcy judges. Appreciators include leaders across the profession who have marveled at, and benefitted from, Elizabeth's hard work and wisdom over the years.

This introduction ideally should connect to the multiple audiences in this large room. One audience member, of course, is Elizabeth herself, by my side. Also, Elizabeth's husband, Bob Mosteller, and Elizabeth's sons Benjamin and Daniel Mosteller. We are in the presence of many Fellows of the American College of Bankruptcy, including the newest members being inducted tonight, plus the loved ones who support the "bankruptcy nerd" in their lives (a positive label in this crowd). We are joined by competitively selected law students and other university students who, in addition to having an interest in this field, are poised to navigate the meaning of "success" and "service" in a world that sends conflicting signals.

As it is customary to review cold hard facts when honoring a special person, let us walk through a few notable points in Elizabeth's professional journey: Elizabeth clerked on the United States Supreme Court. Elizabeth had a fast track to partnership at an elite Washington DC law firm. Elizabeth has been the holder of an exclusive endowed professorship at UNC-Chapel Hill that is reserved for only the "exceptionally distinguished" (arguably more of a throne than a chair even if its holder would not say so herself). And Elizabeth would and should have been a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Had her hearing been scheduled, she would have sailed through Senate confirmation.

Another fact for her sons Daniel and Benjamin: very accomplished people who work with your mother on service activities say Elizabeth is typically the smartest person in the room, including and perhaps especially when grappling with the hardest topics (jurisdiction, constitutional authority, and sovereign immunity, to name a few).

For the students in the audience, please know that success and smarts are not the same as service, let alone “distinguished service.” The American College of Bankruptcy celebrates Elizabeth with the Distinguished Service Award because she has consistently reinvested her success and smarts into the betterment of this field, and into her mentees from the classroom and beyond. Elizabeth has modelled hard and careful work, operating under the highest ethical standards. And Elizabeth has inspired so many other people to, as they say, “give back” and “pay it forward.” Her legacy illustrates the effectiveness of “*show, don’t just tell.*”

Elizabeth, it is not only what you do, but *how* you do it, that has impressed your many appreciators.

And to the audience in this sold-out crowd whose attention may have drifted, now is the perfect time to re-focus. Because I am about to highlight a powerful dimension of Elizabeth’s service, a “secret sauce” of sorts.

Elizabeth, your fans marvel at how deftly you manage and diffuse conflict within groups. Not by burying or ignoring disagreements, but constructively navigating a way forward.

Elizabeth, you make professional service more welcoming and, frankly, pleasant. That practice greatly increases odds that others’ service commitments will endure.

For all of this, Elizabeth, and so much more, thank you.

I’ll direct my last words to Elizabeth’s family. Daniel and Benjamin, your mother is both respected and beloved, an all too rare combination. Thanks to you and your father, Bob Mosteller, for sharing Elizabeth with us.