

DINNER KEYNOTE SPEAKER: PATRICK J. FITZGERALD



The NAUDL is honored to have Patrick J. Fitzgerald as Keynote Speaker for its first ever Annual Dinner. Mr. Fitzgerald is one of the nation's leading lawyers and public servants -- a veteran of some of our nation's most important criminal prosecutions and the current U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. His career of public service, his work ethic, and his integrity make him an authentic role model for our students and for the rest of us.

Early Background

Mr. Fitzgerald grew up in a working-class, Irish-American Catholic family in Brooklyn. His parents emigrated to the United States. He attended Regis High School, a prestigious Jesuit School in Manhattan, on a scholarship. He worked as a school janitor in Brooklyn to make money for college and spent summers opening doors at an upscale co-op building on East 72nd Street in Manhattan. Mr. Fitzgerald received degrees in economics and mathematics from Amherst College before receiving his JD from Harvard Law School in 1985.

Terrorism and Organized Crime Fighter in New York

After briefly practicing civil litigation, and in 1988, Mr. Fitzgerald became an Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of New York. He handled drug-trafficking cases and, in 1993, assisted in the prosecution of leaders and members of the Gambino crime family.

In 1995, Mr. Fitzgerald prosecuted Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman and 11 others charged with planning to bomb the World Trade Center. In 1996, Mr. Fitzgerald became the National Security Coordinator and co-chief of the Terrorism Unit for the Southern District of New York. Among other things, he served as chief counsel in prosecuting Osama Bin Laden and his followers in connection with the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Mr. Fitzgerald tried the embassy bombings case with federal

judge and NAUDL Board member, the Honorable Kenneth M. Karas. According to the Washington Post, "[t]he staff of the 9/11 commission called him one of the world's best terrorism prosecutors."

Corruption Fighter in Chicago

In 2001, U.S. Senator Peter Fitzgerald (no relation), was Illinois' senior Republican. As such, he had the right to recommend a candidate for the position of United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois -- a post that the late Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley has been quoted as saying was one of the three most important in the state.

Senator Fitzgerald went to the then-Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for advice. According to Senator Fitzgerald, "I called Louis Freeh and said, 'Who's the best assistant U.S. attorney you know of in the country?' He said, 'Patrick Fitzgerald in the Southern District of New York.'" Others gave the same answer to the same question. As a result, the President appointed and the U.S. Senate approved Patrick J. Fitzgerald as the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

The U.S. Attorney's office, under Mr. Fitzgerald's leadership, has successfully investigated and prosecuted major corruption cases, including the indictment and prosecution of the former Governor.

The Plame Investigation

In December 2003, Mr. Fitzgerald was appointed by Deputy U.S. Attorney General James B. Comey, to investigate columnist Robert Novak's disclosure of undercover CIA operative Valerie Wilson, also referred to by her maiden name, Valerie Plame. Mr. Fitzgerald brought an indictment for 5 counts of false statements, perjury, and obstruction of justice against Lewis "Scooter" Libby, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's Chief of Staff. On March 6th 2007, Mr. Libby was convicted of 4 of 5 charges of lying under oath.

A Reputation for Integrity

Mr. Fitzgerald has been likened by the Washington Post to the "untouchable" Eliot Ness as "someone who couldn't be influenced either to prosecute someone unfairly or protect someone from being prosecuted unjustly." Stanley L. Cohen, a New York lawyer who has defended a half-dozen terrorism cases prosecuted by Mr. Fitzgerald, has observed that Fitzgerald demonstrates a single-minded dedication to the law. "There's no doubt in my mind that if he's found something, he won't be swayed one way or the other by the politics of it," remarked Mr. Cohen.

Mr. Fitzgerald continues aggressively to lead the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois and serves as a role model of public service.