



# INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF TRIAL LAWYERS

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Statement of Richard Burbidge, President of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers**

The International Academy of Trial Lawyers expressly and unequivocally condemns attacks on the independence of our judiciary and the Rule of Law, two cornerstones of our democracy. Judges are ethically prevented from making public remarks about cases pending before them and must rely upon others to protect the judiciary from inappropriate and disrespectful criticism. Lawyers have a special responsibility in defending the Rule of Law and the independence of our judiciary, and the protection and defense of those principles are integral to this Academy and its work.

The recent attack upon United States District Court Judge James Robart shows disrespect for our judiciary, the Rule of Law, and a system which has existed for almost 250 years. Judge Robart is not a “so-called judge.” Judge Robart, nominated by then-President George W. Bush, was unanimously confirmed by the Senate in 2004 and has served our nation since his confirmation. Like the President of the United States, Judge Robart is entitled to the respect afforded a person in his position and the mutual respect upon which our government was founded.

In June 2016, this Academy issued a statement on the independence of the judiciary. At that time, we expressed that in America, the Rule of Law “has as its foundation the independence and integrity of the Judicial Branch which protects fundamental rights and provides checks and balances against the constant force of political excesses and abuses.” We cannot – and will not – stand silently by as attacks on the independence and integrity of the judicial branch continue. It is our responsibility as well as our privilege to speak out against threats to these foundational principles of our democracy.

#### **About the International Academy of Trial Lawyers**

The Academy is an elite group of trial lawyers representing both sides of the Bar: plaintiffs’ and defendants’ counsel in civil litigation and prosecutors and defense lawyers in criminal cases. Fellowship in the Academy is by invitation only, and trial lawyers are invited to become Fellows only after an extremely careful vetting process that includes discreet inquiries of both judges and other trial lawyers of high standing. Fellows come from firms of all sizes,

from international firms with thousands of lawyers to very small firms. While the majority of the Fellows come from the United States, the Academy also includes lawyers from more than 30 other countries. The Academy's general purposes are to cultivate the science of jurisprudence, promote reforms in the law, facilitate the Administration of Justice, and elevate the standards of integrity, honor and courtesy in the legal profession.