

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak with you about Senate Bill 24 – Naming the Rutland District and Family Court in honor of Judge Frank McCaffrey. I will tell you all about the physical building itself, but before this I would like to speak about the positive impact Judge McCaffrey had on so many people in our county and our state which, I believe, is the real reason this bill should be passed. Everyone who was fortunate enough to know Judge McCaffrey recognizes what an honorable, compassionate and caring person he was. His generosity of giving of himself knew no bounds as he treated everyone with the same kindness, dignity and respect. You were indeed extremely fortunate if Judge McCaffrey took you under his wings and became a mentor to you - So many people have told me how blessed they were that Judge McCaffrey was their mentor. With his mentoring he enabled you to live up to your potential, but more importantly he was a role model to emulate. He touched so many lives with his compassionate decisions and the acts of kindness he performed within our community.

I could go on and on and am sure you will be hearing many, many more who are far more eloquent than I could ever be about what a wonderful, kind hearted person Judge McCaffrey was, and I will leave that to the others.

What I would like to talk to you about is how under Judge McCaffrey's vision, guidance, and leadership, our Rutland courthouse came to be. Family Court was created by this legislature in 1990 and was started in the fall of that year. Judge McCaffrey was the first named Family Court Judge and he was sitting in Rutland, which was his home county. At the time, the staff and judge were put in what we liked to call the "garden level" – but what you would call the basement or cellar – of the Rutland County Courthouse. This was extremely cramped and never felt it would be adequate for the family court needs as it was expected that the "flood gates had opened" when this court was created. Judge McCaffrey became the chairman of our local committee to address the facility needs of the courthouse. In 1993 recognizing that a new courthouse would be needed to address the expanding docket, the Vermont Supreme Court created an advisory committee for facility needs and appointed Judge McCaffrey as Chairman. This committee worked diligently with the community, the legislature and the local bar to insure that a building that would meet our needs would be built. We had meetings, luncheons, obtained resolutions, wrote letters to the paper and testified before the legislature as to what we believed was needed. We had legislators, such as

Rep. Bob Wood, Rep. Alice Eammons and then Senator Vince Illuzzi meet with us at the courthouse to see first hand what the needs really were. At all times it was Judge McCaffrey, with his very “folksy” demeanor who would speak to and testify about our needs. He was the heart and soul of this project and the legislature responded appropriately and appropriated funds for construction of the Rutland District and Family Courthouse. After Judge McCaffrey’s appointment to Chief Administrative Judge, Supreme Court Advisory Committee appointed with Justice Denise Johnson as Chair, but at all times Judge McCaffrey remained on the committee as its heart and soul. After funds for construction were made available, this committee continued to work diligently and finally our beautiful courthouse was opened and dedicated on July 12, 2005. Judge McCaffrey continued in his effort and worked with Sen. Peg Flory to establish the first Drug Court and then continued to give voluntarily of his time and expertise to help those who were suffering from addiction.

Judge McCaffrey’s local leadership in getting the courthouse built is only a small, but very appropriate reason to honor him by dedicating the courthouse to him. This, however, pales with his service to the community, his church and his giving of himself for the betterment of others. He made our state a better place by being the person we should all strive to emulate. Judge McCaffrey is the finest example of what public service should be and honoring him by naming the courthouse in his memory is the right thing to do and serves to remind us of the good that exists in our world.