

Event marks 60th anniversary of commemorating rule of law, civic consciousness

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DANIELSON — Inside Danielson Superior Court, as in courtrooms across the country on Tuesday, judges, lawyers and court staff were urged to rededicate themselves to their professions as part of National

Law Day.

"This year marks the 60th anniversary of Law Day, an event originated by President (Dwight) Eisenhower," said Attorney James Kelley, president of the Windham County Bar Association. "The idea is to commemorate the rule of law and its connection with civic consciousness."

This year's theme, "Separation of Powers, Framework for Freedom," was especially timely, Kelley said.

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"It's the concept of checks and balances that safeguard us and prevent overreaching by any one branch," he said. "But in a larger sense, this kind of event comes at a time when we're seeing a lack of respect for certain institutions and professions, like members of Congress and lawyers, individuals who've dedicated themselves to public service."

As part of the event, the board of directors for the Danielson Veterans Coffeehouse was presented with the judicial district's 2018 Liberty Bell Award, given to individuals and groups not affiliated with the law who've worked to better their communities, who "quietly contribute to making this country a better place," Kelley said.

"Wow, this is thrilling," board President Fred Ruhlemann said as dozens of attendees stood and applauded. "We started in 2015 with maybe 25 members and now regularly get 50 veterans showing up.

What a lot of people don't realize is there are almost no services for vets in Windham County. That's why we're here."

Ruhlemann, who hosts the weekly veterans meetings, said Eastern Connecticut is home to approximately 60,000 veterans, many of whom are unaware of the benefits they're entitled to.

"We're here to be the helping hand," he said.

During his opening remarks, Judge Edward Graziani, an administrative judge at Putnam Superior Court, reminded attendees that the law is a "flexible creature."

"It's a system of rules created to regulate society," he said. "And without rules, there is chaos. The law affects people's health, safety, education and their ability to earn a living. It protects our freedoms."

Graziani said he hoped highlighting the law's importance through the yearly event would uplift its practitioners.

"I hope this energizes each and every one of us," he said. "This is not just a job; the implications go well beyond that. Our main function is to help achieve justice."