

Chief Justice Walter L. Carpeneti
Closing Comments To The First Session of The
Twenty-Seventh Alaska Legislature
March 9, 2011

... I would like to close these remarks with a note about a topic that in recent years has become, I believe, central to our democracy: the need to foster civic education and engagement in America ... for the young people who will carry them forward into the future. As citizens in a democracy, we all have a responsibility to understand how our government functions and the role we each play in the success of our country. Yet a recent national poll found that while over two-thirds of America can name at least one judge on the TV program "American Idol", less than one third can name the three branches of government! **James Madison**, the founding father often hailed as the father of the U.S. Constitution, anticipated the challenge of educating for democracy by reminding us that *"knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."*

...I would like to conclude today with an invitation to each of you--- legislators and... anyone watching this speech--- to **join me in the effort to instill in our young people the same knowledge and respect for the laws and institutions of our country that we are all privileged to share.** Log on to **civics.org** and check out the games, web quests, and lesson plans for yourself. And, after you have done that, let the educators in your communities know about the opportunity and urge them to visit the website and use it in their classrooms... Check it out.

... Thomas Jefferson said *that "the qualifications for self government are not innate.... [T]hey are the result of habit and long training."* **As we work together to advance cost-effective justice, we must remember that the greatest guarantee of a strong future for all three branches of government is a citizenry that understands and embraces the fundamental principles of democracy.**

Mister President, Mister Speaker, Thank You...