

Rocha – Seton Hall Law Graduation 2025 – BOV Welcome Remarks

Good morning, everyone. Faculty, friends, incredibly proud families, and most importantly, the brilliant **graduating Class of 2025!**

What a privilege it is to stand here today. As a proud alum and Chair of the Law School Board of Visitors, I have to confess something right away: **I walked across this very stage almost 27 years ago to the day.** And my first piece of advice to all of you is this: **DO.NOT.BLINK.** Because when you do, time flies so incredibly quickly. It feels like just yesterday I was sitting where you are, filled with the same mix of excitement, nerves, and anticipation.

Let me next say Congratulations, you made it! You stand here today, on the precipice of a new and exciting chapter, ready to unleash your legal prowess upon the world.

To the Seton Hall Law Class of 2025, you've deciphered ancient texts, navigated the complex corridors of legal jargon, and you have spent countless hours studying. Whether in the library, student lounge or coffee and tea shops, possibly fueled by lattes or matcha, you honed

your burning desire to understand the difference between a tort and a trespass. You have participated in moot court, where you discovered your inner thespian, channeling your best Atticus Finch, Elle Woods, Matlock, or even uncovering your inner My Cousin Vinny, depending on your personal hero.

But in all seriousness, what you have accomplished is truly remarkable. You have not only earned a degree; you have earned the tools to shape the future. You have learned to think critically, to argue persuasively (something I know you honed at many a meal with family or friends), and to advocate for those who need it most. You are now on the cusp of a great adventure.

And while I was thinking about how to kick off this morning, I started by asking some of the Deans and professors for those quirky "fun facts" about this class – like how many of you secretly perfected your cake decorating skills during study breaks, or how many adopted a new dog named "Judge Judy," or how many took up running as a stress-reliever

(**raise hand**). But, what I learned is that what truly stands out about *this* class, the Class of 2025, is something far more profound.

You are, unequivocally, a class of **fighters**. Not in any combative sense, but in the absolute best way possible. You have faced down challenges, both academic and personal, with a grit and determination that is truly inspiring. You have shown an incredible capacity for resilience, proving that when the going gets tough, the Seton Hall Law graduates get going. You have supported each other, lifted each other up, and emerged stronger, wiser, and more prepared than ever to tackle whatever comes next. That, more than any statistic, is your defining characteristic, and it's something to be incredibly proud of.

As you embark on your legal careers, remember why you chose this path. Remember the passion that ignited your desire to study law. The legal profession is not always glamorous, but it is a profession with the power to make a real difference. Lawyers are the guardians of justice, the defenders of rights, and the champions of the rule of law. You are the future of the legal profession.

You are the advocates, the counselors and the problem-solvers. You are the ones who will uphold the rule of law, protect the rights of the vulnerable, and ensure that Lady Justice's scales remain balanced, even when she's had a long day. And that is a profound responsibility, and an incredible opportunity.

We gather at a time when the very foundations of our legal system, the very principles of justice and fairness, seem to be tested and challenged in unprecedented ways. The world outside these walls is complex, often uncertain, and sometimes unsettling. You are entering a profession where your skills, your knowledge, and your moral and ethical compass will be more vital than ever before. Seton Hall Law has equipped you with the knowledge, skills, and ethical foundation to make a real difference in the world. And as you embark on this new adventure, remember the words of Justice Thurgood Marshall, “Where you see wrong or inequality or injustice, speak out, because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on.”

Finally, as you join the ranks of our esteemed graduates, you become part of a vast and fabulous alumni network – a community of dedicated professionals who have walked this path before you. This network is a valuable resource, a source of mentorship, guidance, and connection throughout your careers. But more than that, it is a reminder that you are not alone in this endeavor. You are part of a legacy of individuals who have strived to make a difference, to bend the arc of history towards justice.

So, Class of 2025, you're up! Make us proud. Make yourselves proud. And remember, even in the most serious of legal battles, there's always room for a little bit of humor and a lot of fun.

Congratulations, graduates! The future is yours!