

Anthony Kearns ‘Walkout’ For Final Time As Prosecutor

Hunterdon County Prosecutor Anthony P. Kearns, III was officially recognized and thanked for his nine years of service as the County’s Chief Law Enforcement Officer at a traditional ‘Walkout’ ceremony, replete with bagpipes, at the County Justice Complex, on April 12th, his last day in office.

Kearns has left the gubernatorially appointed Prosecutor position to become the Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Metuchen, the highest civilian position in the Diocese.

Freeholder Board Deputy Director John E. Lanza, a fellow Hunterdon County attorney and close friend, in remarks at the ceremony, said that Kearns was one of Hunterdon’s most successful attorneys before being named prosecutor.

“Tony Kearns put a lot of bad guys in jail. Every prosecutor does that. But from his opioid seminars in local town halls to his active shooter presentations at the schools, Tony preferred prevention to prosecution. He made our citizens aware of the risks around them. As a consequence, he made the state's safest county even safer,” Lanza told those in attendance.

The assemblage included Kearns’ family members, Police Officers from around the County, other New Jersey Prosecutors, the State Police, representatives of the Metuchen Diocese, and Hunterdon County officials.

Attendees at the event, in addition to Lanza, included Senators Michael Doherty and Kip Bateman; Freeholder Director Suzanne Lagay; Sherriff Fred Brown; County Clerk Mary Melfi; Surrogate Susan Hoffman; fellow prosecutors from Mercer, Morris, Warren, Union, Somerset counties; and former Somerset County Prosecutor Geoffrey Soriano.

Kearns told the audience that included his Assistant Prosecutors, Investigators and staff, “As I look and recall all the relationships which led to successful arrests, indictments and convictions.

Relationships which permitted me utilize prosecutorial discretion, to ensure the right disposition for the state, the victim, and – yes – even for the defendant, in the hope that the person might grow from the experience, evolve, and become a productive member of society.”

Quoting Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, Kearns said he'd hoped to, "‘Temper prosecutorial zeal with human kindness,’ and that under my watch, my office sought the truth, and that we served the law and justice.”

Hunterdon County Chief of Detectives Frank R. Crisologo said the ‘Walkout,’ “is the traditional act of a law enforcement official saying his final farewell to his colleagues on the radio, after which the officer is returned to the care of his family.”

Michaels J. Williams, the First Assistant Prosecutor, has been named the Acting Prosecutor, pending a decision by Governor Phil Murphy on a new nomination.