

BYU Religious Freedom Annual Review

Religion and Religious Freedom in the COVID-19 Era: Finding Community and Hope

June 18, 2020 Welcome and introduction of Senators, Jane Wise

Welcome to the Thursday session of the 2020 Religious Freedom Annual Review, a program sponsored by the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University. My name is Jane Wise and I am an Associate Director of that Center.

Senator Kyrsten Sinema, senior senator from Arizona, was born in Tucson and went through some challenging times growing up. Her family struggled to make ends meet and for a while they were even homeless. But they got by thanks to family, church, and hard work. Sinema's childhood experience showed her the power of hard work and the importance of helping others. Education was her ticket to a better life. With the help of student loans, academic scholarships and financial aid, she went to Brigham Young University, graduating at age 18; attended Arizona State University, graduating with a master's degree in social work; and then a law degree. She worked with students and families in Arizona who face some of the same challenges she did. Her commitment to service led her to the Arizona legislature, where she passed a law to help veterans get in-state tuition at all Arizona public universities. She cracked down on sex trafficking and advocated for children's health care and education. She was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 2013 and then as a United States senator in 2019, the first female senator in Arizona's history. Now as Arizona's senior senator, Sinema works on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, veterans, ageing, banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committees committed to helping veterans get the benefits they've earned, creating good paying jobs for Arizonans and keeping Americans safe at home and abroad. Sinema feels a duty to serve and give back to the communities and country that gave her so much.

Senator Mike Lee was elected in 2010 as Utah's 16th senator, and has spent his time in the senate as an advocate for founding constitutional principles. Senator Lee acquired a deep

respect for the constitution early on. His father Rex Lee served as the Solicitor General under President Reagan and would often discuss varied aspects of judicial and constitutional doctrine around the kitchen table from due process to the uses of executive Plenary Power. He attended most of his father's arguments before the US Supreme Court, giving him a unique experience and understanding of government up close. Lee graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor of Science in political science, and served as BYU student body president in his senior year. He graduated from BYU Law School in 1997, and went on to serve as law clerk to Judge Dee Benson of the US Court for the District of Utah and then with future Supreme Court Justice, Judge Samuel A. Alito on the US Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Lee spent several years as an attorney with the law firm Sidley and Austin, specializing in appellate and Supreme Court litigation, and then served as an assistant US Attorney in Salt Lake City, arguing cases before the US Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit. He was Governor Jon Huntsman's general counsel and later reunited with Justice Alito, now on the Supreme Court, for a year long clerkship. Lee is a member of the Judiciary Committee and serves as chairman of the antitrust, competition, policy, and consumer rights subcommittees, protecting business competition and personal freedom. He also oversees issues critical to Utah as the chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Moderating today's session will be Brett Scharffs, director of the Center.