

INTRODUCTION

John Colombo

Good morning everyone, and welcome to Champaign. I bring regards from Dean Bruce Smith, who was unable to be here this morning but wanted me to pass along his warm welcome to all of you. I also want to thank specifically Nuno Garoupa and Bob Lawless of our faculty and Sally Cook from our staff for their tireless efforts in putting this conference together and getting you all here safe and sound.

It is always a happy moment when an academic institution assembles such a distinguished group of people for an academic conference, but this particular conference presents an especially happy moment for us at the University of Illinois College of Law, because it commemorates Professor Tom Ulen's long and distinguished career.

I have been Tom's colleague on the faculty for over twenty years now, and I could easily spend the entire two days of this conference with stories and anecdotes that illustrate what a tremendous colleague Tom is, how beloved he is by students, and how important his presence has been to this institution. But I know you want to get on with the academic business at hand, so instead I will take just three minutes to comment on Tom's impact on the discipline of law and economics.

When one uses the phrase law and economics, it almost automatically invokes the name of Richard Posner, and there is no denying Posner's importance to the field. But Tom has been equally instrumental, perhaps even more instrumental, in making law and economics the widespread and widely studied discipline that it is. The Cooter and Ulen text on law and economics, now in its fifth edition and translated into a dozen different languages (including Chinese—which if nothing else goes to show how well Tom understands *market* economics), made law and economics a teachable discipline. The text has spawned two generations of students who “grew up” learning the discipline and has provided a framework for future thought in the field. And it is not just this text; Tom has written dozens of articles in the field pushing the boundaries of Law and Economics forward while recognizing its limitations. He has been a tireless advocate for the discipline, seeding it at universities throughout the world, and he is a constant ambassador for it everywhere he goes. I am certain that if they built a university on the Galapagos Islands, Tom would be there explaining that all this environmental science

is well and good, but to have a *really* complete curriculum, you need a course in law and economics.

So perhaps Richard Posner is the “father” of law and economics; but the familial line certainly would not be the worldwide family it is today without Tom’s efforts. This conference specifically honors Tom, but in a larger sense, every time a conference on law and economics occurs anywhere, every time someone teaches a class in law and economics that sparks another generation of students—every such event honors Tom. And so, Tom, thank you for being my colleague for twenty-plus years; I am proud of you, the College is proud of you, and as this conference demonstrates, the academic world is proud of you. Once again, thank you all for being here and helping us honor our colleague, Tom Ulen.