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CHAMBERS OF  
JUSTICE SHIRLEY S. ABRAHAMSON

To: The Wisconsin Judicial Community

From: Shirley S. Abrahamson

Date: August 31, 2018

Subject: The term ahead

With the Supreme Court to begin hearing oral argument next week, I thought this a good time to provide an update on my plans for the year ahead. Three months ago, on May 30, you'll recall, I announced that I would not seek re-election for a fifth consecutive 10-year term and would continue to serve. I've not changed my mind on either point. The people of this state elected me to a position of public trust and responsibility, and I intend to keep that commitment.

On any day in this state, more than a quarter million people are facing a cancer diagnosis. I am one of them. And, unlike some, I am fortunate in getting the best of care and medical advice and keeping up with my job and my family. In the last term, in addition to writing majority opinions, I wrote thirteen dissenting opinions and five concurring opinions. I participated in virtually every oral argument and conference. A number of times earlier this year, I participated by phone—as colleagues on this court have participated by phone for a variety of reasons over the years. In fact, in my time on the court, several other justices have fought illness and continued to serve. Several justices voted on cases by mail, even before the advent of email, which the court today uses routinely for its votes on opinions as well as procedural and administrative decisions.

The rules—including U.S. Supreme Court practice—permit participation without physical presence and, not incidentally, so do the state and federal laws that protect everyone who wants to continue to work. It was of interest to me to learn, after a bit of research, that another Wisconsin jurist, Chief Justice Rehnquist, participated in the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions when he was fighting illness.

My own participation by phone may well continue on occasion. In the meantime, when I next appear in court, it probably will be in a wheelchair, but I will still have my voice and most of the time, a smile.