

Hello, and thank you for inviting me here this evening.

As you might guess, as Margy Rappaport's daughter –and as someone who somehow found herself drafted as her de facto campaign manager—I'm a little bit biased in her favor. But, of course, everyone in the political arena has their detractors, right? In 20 years' time, even the Clerk of the Circuit Court is going to run afoul of someone.

So, since her opponent in this election cycle appeared to be mounting a determined campaign of his own, one of my first tasks was to identify what some of my mother's political weaknesses might be—where support for her that might be soft could be shored up. That's what campaign managers do, right?

Well, in the course of my research and on the campaign trail, I did *indeed* come across some startling facts: Attorneys –men and women who spend a significant portion of their days filing motions, petitions and briefs at the county courthouse—all raved about how easy Mom and her staff made their lives.

Contractors and developers, without exception, all went on and on about how much easier it was to search and access land records since Mom and her team had revised the storage and retrieval system.

And most importantly, in the course of my travels, I met so many average citizens who, in the course of resolving a family or business dispute, or in the process of buying or

improving their home –or any number of other things that required a call or a trip to the courthouse—had crossed paths with my mother. And all, unanimously, had a story to tell of how my mother, Margy Rappaport had helped them.

Yes, as my path wound through Howard County, from the suburban sprawl of Columbia to the family farms further west, I noticed an undeniable trend—everyone loves Margy!

Now, this shouldn't have come as any sort of surprise. After all, she *is* my mother, and I love her dearly. But surely *someone* must have a bone to pick with her. Amazingly, though, in this current political climate of “throw the bums out,” it would seem that the only person who wants to send her packing is her opponent. Certainly, that is understandable, but I fear that he has found himself in a very lonely minority.

Now these second-hand testimonials I'm sharing with you are wonderful and very gratifying but let me tell you just a little bit about what my mom's job as Clerk of Court entails, and a little bit about her achievements that have earned her this praise.

The Clerk of Court is really the gatekeeper and facilitator of information between the Circuit Court and the public. All matters Criminal, Civil, Family and Juvenile are processed through the Clerk's office, as well as matters of Licensing and Land Records—trusts, deeds, etc.

If you've ever had a family or legal matter here in Howard County; sold or bought a piece of property, built a house or got a business license, you probably got a letter regarding the matter with "Margy Rappaport, Clerk of the Circuit Court" stamped on it.

If you ever had to go down to the courthouse in Ellicott City to file legal papers of any kind, or to petition the Court for anything, you may have dealt with my mother herself. Or you may have been helped by one of the 41 people on her staff that she has trained and supervises.

If so, I trust that it was a pleasant and relatively quick visit there. One of the reasons why Margy Rappaport and her staff have been cited as being so efficient is that, when she first took the job, she instituted a policy of cross-training all her employees in all the functions of the Clerk's Office. The result being that when you call or visit that office—no matter who may be helping you—they will *indeed* be able to help you.

If someone's on their lunch break, the whole process doesn't shut down. I'm sure we've all encountered that scenario on too many occasions. But not at the Clerk's Office.

You know, this Information Age we're living in has changed the way we do business, the way we pay our bills and, in fact, the way we live our lives.

I'm not doing any sniping about my mother's opponent—that's not her style, and as her representative here tonight, nor is it mine. But the one criticism he has manufactured about Margy Rappaport is the suggestion that, because of her age—she *is* old enough to be his mother—she may not be able to harness the newest technologies of this information era. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It was Mom and her staff that migrated Howard County's land records, as part of a state-wide initiative, to an electronic database that made them readily accessible, researchable and user-friendly for the first time in history. No more pouring over dusty old volumes of plattes and maps.

By the way, a little-known fact is that the Clerk of Court position in every county in Maryland is actually a *state* employee position. But each of those clerks is selected by the citizens of their respective home counties.

Occasionally, someone will voice a criticism asking why the court doesn't implement a particular software or technology. That's because it's all mandated by the state. Everything along those lines that happens here in Howard County is also taking place in the other 23 counties. In fact, Margy Rappaport and her staff have helped lead the way in integrating new technologies to allow all 24 counties communicate with one another electronically.

And currently, the Clerk's Office is in the midst of transferring *all* the court's records into a Web-based system

that, within four years, will allow each and every one of us to access to them from our home computers, our laptops, even our hand-held mobile devices.

But not when we're driving!

You'll even be able to file petitions and respond to legal matters electronically as well. As convenient as it is to visit the Clerk's Office, you may never have to do it again.

There's one thing, though, that will always still require a trip to the courthouse. Now many people may not know this, but the Clerk of Court performs hundreds of marriage ceremonies, every year, right there in the office.

My mom thought the surroundings there seemed a little impersonal for such an important event in people's lives, so she took a little-used room in the back of the building and personally appointed it to make their nuptials a bit more pleasant and private. If that sounds a little like Andy of Mayberry, I think that's a good thing.

However, I don't think Andy ever managed a budget of nearly three-million dollars annually, and Margy Rappaport does that, too. She has managed the Clerk's Office of Howard County for nearly 20 years with a friendly, human touch. She has also brought it from the paper and file cabinet era onto the Internet into the 21st Century.

Earlier this year, the publication *The Daily Record* sent their reporters, undercover, to counties all over the state of

Maryland to measure the customer service and efficiency of the various Clerk's Offices. They cited Margy Rappaport and her staff as one of the best in the state. No other county got higher marks.

My mother wouldn't settle for anything less. She considers it a great privilege to serve her fellow citizens of Howard County. I am very proud of her. And on Tuesday, November 2, we'll be grateful if you'd vote for her again as your Clerk of the Circuit Court.

Thank you.