Introduction: Festschrift for Robert Rabin: Seventeenth Annual Clifford Symposium on Tort Law and Social Policy

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INTRODUCTION

Stephan Landsman*

Bob Rabin is one of the towering figures of American tort law. His work has influenced the way we think about virtually all the critical questions confronted by tort scholars. His writings on the tobacco controversy, alternative compensation schemes, and tort theory have powerfully affected discourse on these topics. His casebook with Franklin and Green has served as an outstanding introduction to tort law for thousands of students.

Bob has been a great friend of the Clifford Symposium. He has appeared on the program more than half a dozen times and has contributed seminal pieces about enabling torts, the tobacco wars, the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, medical malpractice, non-economic loss, and more.

There is no better introduction to Bob’s work than his magisterial essay contained in this Festschrift. In it, he describes not only his work, but also the several-hundred-year journey of tort doctrine. It should come as no surprise that at almost every important turn in the story, one finds a critical scholarly piece by Bob. His emphasis on the true history of tort has helped redefine scholarly debate about the field’s origins. His focus on institutional efficacy and regulation has

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refocused the way we judge the worth of the system. His corpus is an inspired exploration of both what we know and what we need to find out, all set within a framework sensitive to the zeitgeist. This “little” piece is so fine that it will become required reading for my torts students and is a lovely invitation to explore the work of a true scholarly master. It also serves as the best sort of introduction to the works of the distinguished scholars who have contributed to this volume honoring a giant in the field.