Irish American Bar Association of New York (IABANY)
260 Madison Ave,
New York, NY 10016
RE: Tenth Annual Bloomsday Celebration

Greetings Friends,

It is an honor to have been asked to speak at this year’s Bloomsday celebration -- I apologize for not being able to attend, but nevertheless wanted to make sure to send my best wishes to the Irish American Bar Association of New York (IABANY) for hosting this event, especially in the era of the pandemic when a sense of community is needed more than ever.

Because of *Ulysses*, James Joyce has come to be known as the great epicist of the everyday. His stunning, elaborate, brilliant, and sometimes intimidating work was fundamentally human. He concerned himself with the not-at-all-simple journey each of us makes from morning to night. Politics and world affairs were never very far from his scope, but he took up the questions of politics through the lens that matters most—the effects of the political on each of us as we go about our lives.

Today’s circumstances reflect this in ways Joyce might not have imagined. The national anguish over systemic racism and police violence; the descent of a pandemic that brought society to a standstill; the landmark ruling this week that helps to secure basic equality for LGBTQ Americans; so much of what goes on around us today has do to with enormous phenomena and their immediate, concrete, sometimes violent impact on specific human beings, everywhere and everyday.

It strikes me that you, who work in the law, are like novelists, at least a little bit Joycean in the sense that you spend so much time with the written word, exploring and then effectuating its concrete consequences for human affairs and individual lives. With so much change upon us - and so many changes needed from us - it is as good a time as ever to seek out new ways for words to become actions.

I am wishing you all health and safety during these difficult times, and sending you all my warmest regards. Thank you to IABANY for the work you’re doing, and I look forward to crossing paths in person in the future.

Sincerely,

Pete Buttigieg
Former Mayor
City of South Bend, Indiana

PB/sp