



THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

Maureen O'Connor

Chief Justice



Chief Justice **Maureen O'Connor** is the 10th chief justice and the first woman in Ohio history to lead the Ohio judicial branch.

Since she took office in 2011, Chief Justice O'Connor has led significant reforms and improvements in the Ohio judicial system, including cutting the Ohio Supreme Court budget, establishing a task force to examine court funding statewide, creating a committee to examine the administration of the death penalty, and proposing improvements to strengthen judicial elections in Ohio.

She first joined the Supreme Court of Ohio as a justice in January 2003. She was re-elected in November 2008 in a landslide victory in which she carried each of Ohio's 88 counties and took approximately 68 percent of the vote. She was elected chief justice in 2010, by a 2-to-1 margin over her challenger and again carried every county.

Her first statewide judicial election in 2002, in which she took more than 57 percent of the vote, made her the 148th justice to the court, the sixth woman to join the court, and gave the court its first-ever female majority.

Born in the nation's capital, but raised in Strongsville and Parma, Chief Justice O'Connor's career in public service and the law spans three decades and includes service as a private lawyer, magistrate, common pleas court judge, prosecutor, and Supreme Court justice.

She earned her bachelor of arts at Seton Hill College in 1973, before going on to earn her law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 1980.

While gaining experience in practice as an attorney during the early 1980s, Chief Justice O'Connor created a home for her family and her legal career in Northeast Ohio. Appointed a magistrate in Summit County in 1985, she served in that capacity until becoming a common pleas court judge in 1993. As a busy trial judge, Chief Justice O'Connor was selected by her peers to serve as the administrative judge – a testament to her ability to build coalitions and maintain collegiality while administering to the business of the courts.

She resigned from the bench to become the Summit County prosecuting attorney in 1995. There, she aggressively prosecuted repeat offenders, violent criminals, and public officials who committed ethical violations or improprieties, and lobbied the General Assembly for tougher laws on rape and gang-related offenses. Her untiring work received accolades from victims' rights groups and educational institutions, and earned awards from Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Cleveland State University. In 1998, she was elected lieutenant governor – the second-highest official in the state. She became the governor's chief advisor on criminal justice issues, serving as director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, and as chair of Ohio's Security Task Force and the State Building Security Review Committee.

Jan. 1, 2011 – Maureen O'Connor became the first female chief justice and just the 10th chief in the history of the Supreme Court of Ohio. She joined the court in 2002, as the state's 148th justice, which, at the time, gave the Supreme Court its first-ever female majority.

In the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, she led the state in its response to new threats of terrorism by working with law enforcement, Ohio EMA, and the Department of Homeland Security, efforts that garnered the praise of federal homeland security officials.

Chief Justice O'Connor also has raised two adult sons, Alex and Ed Kipp, and has four grandchildren, Xavier, Henry, and twin girls Mallory & Maryn.

Chief Justice O'Connor has pursued an extensive agenda for strengthening the third branch of Ohio government in a number of key areas:

- **JUDICIAL ELECTIONS:** Judicial Elections: In 2013, Chief Justice O'Connor announced an 8-point plan for improving judicial selection in Ohio and began a campaign for collecting public input on the ideas. In 2014, she proposed a 3-point plan based on the feedback and began the process of working with legislative leaders on measures. In 2015, Chief Justice O'Connor and partner organizations launched JudicialVotesCount.org to better educate Ohio voters about what judges do and why it is important to all citizens. The website, which fulfills one aspect of her plan by implementing a comprehensive statewide nonpartisan voter information and engagement effort, provides a centralized repository so voters can gain easy access to more information about judges and judicial candidates with an ultimate goal of elevating meaningful voter participation levels in judicial elections.
- **TECHNOLOGY:** Chief Justice O'Connor led efforts to assist local courts with their technology needs by implementing the Ohio Courts Technology Initiative in February 2015. More than \$2.5 million in grants have been awarded to local courts to upgrade technology that ensures the efficient and effective administration of justice.
- **ACCESS TO JUSTICE:** The Chief Justice charged the Supreme Court's Task Force on Access to Justice with identifying obstacles to accessing the civil justice system in Ohio. The task force issued 11 recommendations in April 2015, which include more funding and higher fees for out-of-state attorneys to fund civil legal aid work and creating an Access-to-Justice position at the Supreme Court.
- **BUDGET:** Chief Justice O'Connor appointed a task force on the judicial budget to identify the method and manner by which Ohio courts are funded, determine the long-term efficacy of the current funding models, and review possible alternatives that might provide sustained and consistent funding for Ohio courts.
- **DEATH PENALTY:** In a cooperative effort between the Supreme Court of Ohio and the Ohio State Bar Association, Chief Justice O'Connor led the establishment of the Joint Task Force to Review the Administration of Ohio's Death Penalty, a group of 21 judges, prosecuting and defense attorneys, and lawmakers, to examine ways to ensure the administration of capital punishment is fair and judicious. The group issued its report in April 2014.
- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** Chief Justice O'Connor is active in encouraging members of the judiciary to be active members of their communities by volunteering and engaging in worthwhile causes, while dispelling the common misconception that judges are separate and apart from the communities they serve.
- **CLE:** Working with judges and the organized bar associations, Chief Justice O'Connor led an effort to reform and improve the system of continuing legal education for judges and lawyers, including expanded use of technology and distance learning. The new rules went into effect January 1, 2014.
- **COMMERCIAL DOCKETS:** Chief Justice O'Connor led the effort to establish rules that allow certain qualified courts to create separate dockets to resolve business-to-business disputes fairly and efficiently. The rules went into effect in July 2013, and commercial dockets are now successfully operating in Hamilton and Lucas counties.

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio

- Elected in November 2010; term began January 1, 2011

Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio

- Elected in November 2002; term began January 2003
- Re-elected in November 2008; term began in January 2009

Prosecuting Attorney, Summit County

- Served from 1995 to 1999

Judge, Summit County Court of Common Pleas

- Served from 1993 to 1995 and elected by her peers to serve as administrative judge

Magistrate, Summit County Probate Court

- Appointed in 1985 and served until 1993

Attorney, private practice of law

- Practiced from 1981 to 1985; handled both criminal and civil cases

STATEWIDE PUBLIC SERVICE

Lieutenant Governor and Director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, State of Ohio

- As lieutenant governor from 1999 to 2003, Chief Justice O'Connor also chaired the State of Ohio Security Task Force and the State Building Security Review Committee

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Esther Brocker Award, Capital University Law School, 2015
- Dr. Bennett J. Cooper Award, Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections, 2015
- Public Service Award, Ohio Association for Civil Trial Attorneys, 2014
- Honorary Doctor of Laws, University of Akron School of Law, 2013
- Commencement Speaker for the University of Akron School of Law, 2013
- Alumnus of the Year, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, 2012
- Founders' Award, Ohio Women's Bar Association, 2011
- Pioneer Award, Akron Bar Association, 2011
- Irish Legal 100, 2010
- Commencement Speaker for Seton Hill College, May 2001
- Commencement Speaker for Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, 1999
- Cleveland State University Distinguished Alumnae Award for Civic Achievement, 1997
- MADD Law Enforcement Award, Summit County, Ohio, 1997

EDUCATION

- Bachelor of Arts, Seton Hill College, 1973
- Juris Doctor, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, 1980

PROFESSIONAL

Member, Board of Directors, Conference of Chief Justices

PERSONAL

Born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Strongsville, Ohio and Parma, Ohio

Member of St. Vincent de Paul, Akron, Ohio

Children: Alex and Ed; Four Grandchildren