



Sharon L. Kennedy

CHIEF JUSTICE, SUPREME COURT OF OHIO



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Sharon L. Kennedy was elected Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio in November 2022. She is the eleventh Chief Justice and the second woman to serve in the role. Chief Justice Kennedy first joined the court as a justice in 2012, having been elected to fill an unexpired term. She was elected to her first full term in November 2014 and re-elected in November 2020.

Prior to her term on the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Kennedy served at the Butler County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division beginning in 1999. From 2005 until December of 2012, Chief Justice Kennedy served as the administrative judge of that division. During her time as administrative judge, she improved the case management system to ensure the timely resolution of cases for families and children. Working with state legislators she championed a “common sense” family law initiative to reduce multiple-forum litigation for Butler County families.

When Butler County faced tough economic times, Chief Justice Kennedy organized concerned elected officials in a county-wide Budget Work Group. Seeing the need to bring private sector financial know-how to the government, she worked to create the Advisory Committee to the Budget Work Group. Chief Justice Kennedy served as the facilitator and led discussions between county officials and private sector leaders to analyze county finances, study and implement cost saving measures, and present business driven fiscal policy to the county commissioners.

In 1991, after obtaining her law degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, Chief Justice Kennedy ran a small business of her own as a solo practitioner. While in private practice she served the legal needs of families, juveniles, and the less fortunate. As special counsel for Attorney General Betty D. Montgomery, Chief Justice Kennedy fought on behalf of Ohio’s taxpayers to collect monies due the State of Ohio. As a part-time magistrate in the Butler County Area Courts, Chief Justice Kennedy presided over a wide array of civil litigation and assisted law enforcement officers and private citizens seeking the issuance of criminal warrants for arrest.

Chief Justice Kennedy began her career in the justice system as a police officer at the Hamilton Police Department. She was assigned to a rotating shift, single-officer road patrol unit working to protect and serve the citizens of the City of Hamilton. From the routine, to the heart-pounding, to the heart-breaking, she has seen it all. During her time as an officer, Chief Justice Kennedy also worked undercover operations, implemented crime prevention programs, and later, as a civil assistant, assisted in drafting police policy and procedure for the Accreditation Program.

Throughout her career Chief Justice Kennedy has served on numerous boards, developed, and facilitated programs to address the needs of young people, and worked with judges across the state. As a dedicated jurist she has received multiple awards of

recognition including: The AMVETS Department of Ohio 2018 Past Department Commanders' Civil Servant of the Year Award; The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Silver Good Citizenship Medal, May 5, 2018; Leadership Ohio Community Leadership Award, 2016; The University of Cincinnati College of Law Nicholas Longworth, III Alumni Achievement Award, May 17, 2014; Northwest High School Distinguished Alumnus Award, April 25, 2014; named one of 13 professional women to watch by The Cincinnati Enquirer, March 17, 2013; Excellence in Public Service, June 2009; Judge of the Year, 2006; Above the Fold Award, 2002; and the Furtherance of Justice Award, 2001. Chief Justice Kennedy was also featured in Trends in the Judiciary: Interviews with Judges Across the Globe, Volume II, published by CRC Press in February 2015.