The Third Branch

The Supreme Court of the State of Oklahoma
2017
“The courts of justice of the State shall be open to every person, and speedy and certain remedy afforded for every wrong and for every injury to person, property, or reputation; and right and justice shall be administered without sale, denial, delay, or prejudice.”

Okla. Const. art. 2, §6
Oklahoma Art In Public Places and The Veterans’ Memorial

Art in Public Places, the brainchild of Betty Price, provided funding for the art used in the public spaces of the Oklahoma Judicial Center. One-third of this funding was used to restore the Oklahoma Veteran’s Memorial. The Memorial was constructed as a place to honor the Oklahomans who gave their lives to defend our Constitution and our country. Because their daily work is to uphold the Constitutions of the United States and of Oklahoma, the Supreme Court determined that there was no better use for these public monies than to honor those who gave their lives to preserve our liberties.

The memorial sculpture was originally created in 1986 by Jay O’Melia and Bill Sowell. It bears a plaque listing the names of the Oklahomans awarded the Medal of Honor:

Joseph L. Epps
George P. Hays
Samuel M. Sampler
Harold L. Turner
John L. Smith
Ken D. Bailey
Ernest Childers
Jack C. Montgomery
Troy A. McGill
Henry Schauer
Leon R. Vance
Roy W. Harmon
Ernest E. Evans
Don J. Gott
Charles F. Carey
Manuel Perez, Jr.

Herman C. Wallace
Jack L. Treadwell
John R. Crews
John N. Reese
Albert E. Schawb
Richard M. McCool
Harold G. Kiner
William R. Shockley
Fred F. Henry
Tony K. Burris
Larry S. Pierce
Riley L. Pitts
(Amos Chapman not included on plaque)
(Ruben Rivers officially recognized in 1997)

It is surrounded by four walls representing the wars fought by Oklahoma soldiers and listing the names of the Oklahomans killed in action during that war.
Back Row (left to right): Justice John Reif, Justice James Edmondson, Justice Tom Colbert, Justice Patrick Wyrick
Front Row (left to right): Justice Joseph Watt, Vice Chief Justice Noma Gurich, Chief Justice Douglas Combs, Justice Yvonne Kauger, and Justice Jim Winchester
The Supreme Court

The Courtroom, a beautiful room housed in the State Capitol, belongs to the people of Oklahoma, as do all courtrooms in the State. All sessions conducted in the Courtroom are open to the public. Citizens are welcome, and they are urged to attend these sessions. Along the walls of the Courtroom are the portraits of the first five Supreme Court Justices: R.L. Williams, Matthew Kane, Jesse J. Dunn, John B. Turner, and Samuel W. Hayes. The pictures of the current members of the Court are placed on the walls immediately outside the Courtroom doors. Pursuant to the Oklahoma Constitution, the first five Justices initially presided over all civil and criminal cases, but as the population began to grow and the court docket lengthened, it became clear that a five-judge court would not be able to handle all the cases. Four other Justices were appointed in 1917. In 1918, the Court of Criminal Appeals was statutorily created and three judges were appointed to preside over all criminal matters. Since June 30, 1987, the Court of Criminal Appeals has consisted of five judges.

Solid mahogany found throughout the room was imported from the West Indies in 1918. Four large pillars of Vermont marble, weighing two tons each, support the ceiling. The ceiling is one of the most striking aspects of the Courtroom. The ten solid brass light fixtures illuminating the Courtroom were designed in New York City in 1970. Vermont marble beneath the ceiling at the north and south ends of the Courtroom bears the following inscriptions respectively: “The safety of the State is the highest law”—Justinian and “The foundations of justice are that no man shall suffer wrong”—Cicero.

In the summer of 2011, the Oklahoma Supreme Court, the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Oklahoma Courts Management Information Systems moved into the newly opened Oklahoma Judicial Center. This building, a portion of which is new construction and a portion of which consists of restoration of the Oklahoma Historical Society building built in 1929, now serves as one collective space for the administration of the Oklahoma Courts. The building was built with Georgia granite and limestone from Oolitic, Indiana, the same limestone which is found on the Empire State Building in New York, and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. It is located directly south and east of the State Capitol Building. Justice Yvonne Kauger, Oklahoma Judicial Center Building Committee Chair, has overseen and shepherded the renovation of the building. In 2017, a photo of the Supreme Court Building beginning construction was discovered by Stuart Ostler, Oklahoma Capitol Photographer. It is pictured on the cover of this brochure, in the background and to the right of the west end of the Capitol Building.

Although the new building hosts a Hearing Room, the Supreme Court pursuant to 73 O.S. 2011 §15.1 maintains control of the State Capitol Conference Room and Courtroom for judicial court sessions and ceremonies. The Court of Criminal Appeals has replicated its former Courtroom which was located in the State Capitol in the Oklahoma Judicial Center.
Oklahoma Supreme Court Hearing Room

Court of Criminal Appeals
The Court of Criminal Appeals

Unlike most states, Oklahoma has two courts of last resort. The Supreme Court determines all issues of a civil nature, and the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals decides all criminal matters. Members of these courts and of the Court of Civil Appeals are appointed by the Governor from a list of three names submitted by the Oklahoma Judicial Nominating Commission.

In making its decision, the Oklahoma Supreme Court interprets both the State and Federal Constitutions. If the question presented is one purely of state law, the Oklahoma Supreme Court is the final arbiter. An opinion of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, based on the Oklahoma Constitution, affording greater rights than those preserved by the United States Constitution may not be overturned by the United States Supreme Court.

Criminal cases fall within the exclusive appellate jurisdiction of the Court of Criminal Appeals. Pursuant to art. 7 § 4, if a conflict arises over the jurisdiction of the two courts—Supreme Court or Court of Criminal Appeals—the Supreme Court determines which court has jurisdiction. Its determination is final and not subject to review.

Pictured are Chief Justice Douglas Combs of the Oklahoma Supreme Court and Chief Judge Gary Lumpkin of the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals.
The Court of Civil Appeals

The Court of Civil Appeals is responsible for the majority of appellate decisions. These opinions may be released for publication either by the Court of Civil Appeals or by the Supreme Court. When an opinion is released for publication by the Supreme Court, it has precedential value. The Court of Civil Appeals is comprised of four divisions, each composed of three Judges. Divisions I and III of the Court of Civil Appeals are located in Oklahoma City at the Denver Davison Building, and Divisions II and IV are housed in Tulsa at the Kerr-Edmondson Building.

Back row (left to right): Judge Brian Goree, Judge John Fischer, Judge Jane Wiseman, Judge E. Bay Mitchell, Judge Robert Bell, Judge Deborah B. Barnes, and Judge Barbara Swinton
Front row (left to right): Judge Jerry L. Goodman, Vice Chief Judge Thomas Thornbrugh, Chief Judge Kenneth L. Buettner, Judge Keith Rapp and Judge Larry E. Joplin
The Oklahoma Judicial System

Oklahoma Supreme Court
General Superintending Control
9 Justices
Appellate jurisdiction in civil matters

Court of Civil Appeals
12 Judges
Civil appeals assigned to one of 4 divisions by the Supreme Court

Court of Criminal Appeals
5 Judges
Appellate jurisdiction in criminal matters

District Court
75 District Judges; 77 Associate District Judges; 89 Special Judges
Original jurisdiction over all justiciable matters

Workers' Compensation Court of Existing Claims
4 Judges
Injury Compensation Claims

Court of Tax Review
3 District Judges
Protests on Tax Levies

Municipal Court Not of Record (352)
Approx. 360 full/part-time Judges
City Ordinance Violations

Municipal Criminal Court of Record (2)
7 full-time Judges
City Ordinance Violations

Indicates route of appeal
Indicates assignment of cases

Courts of Last Resort
Courts of General Jurisdiction
Intermediate Appellate Court
Courts of Limited Jurisdiction
Bringing a case before the Appellate Courts

In Oklahoma, all litigants are entitled to an appeal as a matter of right. Appeals to the Court of Criminal Appeals come directly from the District Court. All appeals in civil cases are made to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Appeals may be made to the Supreme Court from the District Court, Workers’ Compensation Court of Existing Claims, Court of Tax Review, and state agencies such as the Department of Public Safety, Oklahoma Tax Commission, Oklahoma Corporation Commission and the Department of Human Services. Many of these appeals are directed by the Supreme Court to one of the four divisions of the Court of Civil Appeals. Most cases reviewed in the Supreme Court are from the Court of Civil Appeals. These cases come before the Supreme Court on petitions for certiorari review.

Certiorari allows the Supreme Court to bring the record up from the Court of Civil Appeals and to review the Court of Civil Appeals’ decision. A review of an opinion of the Court of Civil Appeals in the Supreme Court on writ of certiorari is a matter of sound judicial discretion, and will be granted only when there are special and important reasons—and if a majority of the Justices direct that certiorari be granted. Certiorari may be granted when the Court of Civil Appeals has decided a question of substance not previously determined by the Oklahoma Supreme Court or the United States Supreme Court, the Court of Civil Appeals’ divisions have issued conflicting opinions, or when the Court of Civil Appeals’ decision is a substantial departure from the usual course of judicial proceedings.

When new first impression issues, or important issues of law, or matters of great public interest are at stake, the Supreme Court may retain a case directly from the trial court. In addition to appeals from a trial, issues come to the Supreme Court within its general superintending control over all inferior courts, agencies, commissions and boards created by law, with the exception of the Court on the Judiciary and the Senate sitting as a Court of Impeachment.

Disposition of cases pending before the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court operates very differently from a trial court. There is no jury and, except on very rare occasions, no testimony from witnesses. The Court receives the record of the trial (transcript and any court papers filed in the case), and written arguments (briefs) of the lawyers. The Supreme Court has total discretion in deciding which cases it will hear. Cases which are not assigned to the Court of Civil Appeals for decision are assigned on a rotating basis to an individual Justice by the Chief Justice. If the Chief Justice is disqualified, the assignment is made by the Vice Chief Justice or by the senior justice in the majority. Cases coming to the Court from the Court of Civil Appeals on certiorari are assigned during Monday conferences, also on a rotating basis. The assigned Justice presents a petition for certiorari and makes a recommendation to the Court. The granting or denial of a petition for certiorari is discretionary. If a petition for certiorari is
granted, the case is assigned to a Justice to write an opinion.

Under art. 7, §5 of the Oklahoma Constitution, the concurrence of the majority of the Justices is necessary to decide any question. Because the Oklahoma Supreme Court is composed of nine members, an opinion must receive at least five votes. Other Justices may write dissenting opinions. Even if a Justice agrees with the result reached by the majority opinion, the Justice may author a concurring, concurring specially, concurring-in-result, or concurring-in-judgment opinion stating the reasons why the law as stated by the majority opinion is correct in the cause presented. If a Justice agrees with the law expressed in an opinion, the vote is to concur. If the Justice disagrees with the law as expressed or applied in an opinion, the vote is a dissent. Concurring and concurring specially votes are treated as a full concurrence and may be counted in obtaining a majority vote. Concurring in result and concurring in judgment votes may not be counted as votes to form a majority opinion.

An opinion issued by the Court is a product of many hours of in-depth, detailed study and research. These opinions and orders are handed down each Tuesday and appear on the Supreme Court website at www.oscn.net. Copies are mailed to the attorneys. Parties dissatisfied with the Court’s opinion may file a petition for rehearing within 20 days, requesting the Court to take a second look at the law or the reasoning used in support of the result reached. Once an opinion has been issued, copies are available to the general public in the Office of the Court Clerk and online at www.oscn.net. After an opinion is adopted it becomes legal precedent, and guides lawyers, litigants, and judges in future cases.
When an issue is particularly novel or of great importance, the Court may order the parties to appear for oral argument. Generally, each side will be given 30 minutes to present its case. This time may be divided between the original argument and rebuttal. Later, at a private conference, the Justices discuss the arguments presented, and the Justice originally assigned the case will author a proposed opinion. This proposed opinion, like all others, is considered by all nine Justices and voted upon in conference.
The Supreme Court and the Judicial System

The historic and primary focus of the Supreme Court is to decide civil appellate cases. However, the Court has additional duties of equal importance. The Court, pursuant to art. 7, §4 of the Oklahoma Constitution, has administrative responsibility for the entire Oklahoma judicial system. The Court establishes the rules for all courts in Oklahoma. The Supreme Court is developing and implementing a statewide uniform case management system for the appellate and district courts of Oklahoma. Oklahoma has a unified bar. Membership in the Oklahoma Bar Association is required in order to practice law in Oklahoma. The Court sets the rules for admission to the bar and for the ethical practice of law; the Court administers appropriate discipline in cases of attorney misconduct. In recent years, the Supreme Court has been vested with further responsibilities by the legislature, including appeals of expungement orders, decisions of the Oklahoma Securities Commission, victim protective orders, original and exclusive jurisdiction over bond approvals and final orders on the nonpayment of child support.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court works closely with the federal judiciary. The Court is often called upon to answer federal certified questions pursuant to the Uniform Certification of Questions of Law Act, 20 O.S. 2011 §1601, et seq. Certified questions are issues raised in a federal case for which there is no Oklahoma law, and the Oklahoma Supreme Court is called upon to settle the issue.

Additionally, many of the Justices make personal appearances to speak to members of the Bar, civic clubs, and educational groups. These appearances are made in an attempt to help all citizens understand the Court’s workings and to inform them of the decision-making process. The Justices often administer official oaths of office to public officials. Justices frequently give tours of the Oklahoma Judicial Center.

Oklahoma Bar Association Law Day Contest Winners
Pursuant to the Okla. Const., art. 7, §§1, 2, the Court selects from its members a Chief Justice and a Vice Chief Justice. The Court selects a new Chief Justice every two years. The Chief Justice, who is the first among equals, presides at all court sessions, and chairs the state judicial conference. The Okla. Const. art. 7, §5 vests general administrative authority over all courts in the state in the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice administers the judicial branch of state government in accordance with the rules of the Supreme Court and represents the Court and judicial system in public appearances. The Vice Chief Justice’s term of office is coextensive with that of the Chief Justice.
The Justices of the Oklahoma Supreme Court

The Oklahoma Supreme Court is a constitutional tribunal consisting of nine Justices. Each Justice is selected from one of nine judicial districts and sits for a six-year term. Each Justice must be at least thirty years old, shall have been a qualified elector in the appropriate district for at least one year immediately prior to the appointment, and have been a licensed practicing attorney or judge of a court of record for five years preceding appointment. The Justices must maintain their status as licensed attorneys while holding office, and pay annual dues to the Oklahoma Bar Association.

Justices, Judges of the Court of Civil Appeals and appointees to district court judgeships that become vacant during a term of office are appointed by the Governor from the list of candidates presented by the Judicial Nominating Commission, as mandated by art. 7-B of the Okla. Const. Applicants for appointment to the Supreme Court are subjected to extensive investigation by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation and to intensive interviews by the Judicial Nominating Commission. The Justices stand for retention on a six-year rotating schedule. The retention ballot appears on general election ballots and is a nonpartisan, non-competitive election process. If a Justice resigns or dies during a term, vacancies are filled by gubernatorial appointment from the appropriate Supreme Court judicial district. Newly appointed Justices who serve more than one year must stand for retention at the next regular election.

9 Judicial Districts:

1. Justice John F. Reif
2. Justice Patrick Wyrick
3. Vice-Chief Justice Noma Gurich
4. Justice Yvonne Kauger
5. Justice James R. Winchester
6. Justice Tom Colbert
7. Justice James E. Edmondson
8. Chief Justice Douglas L. Combs
Douglas L. Combs, District No. 8

Combs was born October 17, 1951 in Shawnee, Oklahoma. He is currently serving as Chief Justice for 2017 and 2018. He graduated from Shawnee High School in 1969. Combs attended St. Gregory’s Junior College for one year on an athletic scholarship and transferred to the University of Oklahoma receiving his Bachelor’s degree in Political Science in 1973. He received his Juris Doctorate degree from Oklahoma City University in 1976. While in law school, Combs worked as a Deputy Court Clerk for the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Following admission to the Oklahoma Bar Association in 1976, Combs served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Oklahoma under Attorney General Larry Derryberry. In 1977, he returned to his hometown, Shawnee, and entered private practice as an associate with the firm of Henry, West and Sill. Combs remained in private practice as an associate and then a partner in the firm of Henry, West, Sill, Combs and Henry until 1982, when he opened his own law office in Shawnee.

Combs began his judicial career in January 1995 as a Special Judge for the Twenty-third Judicial District, serving both Pottawatomie and Lincoln Counties. While a special judge, Combs was responsible for the establishment of the first Drug Court in the Twenty-third Judicial District. Combs presided over the Drug Court docket while a special judge, and subsequently as district judge until his appointment to the Supreme Court. He was first elected without opposition to District Judge in November 2002, and again without opposition in 2006. He served eight years as District Judge for the Twenty-third Judicial District.

Combs was appointed by Governor Brad Henry to serve as a Supreme Court Justice for District 8 on January 1, 2010. His appointment followed the retirement of Justice Rudolph Hargrave of Wewoka, Oklahoma. Justice Hargrave had served the State of Oklahoma as a Justice since 1974.

Justice Combs has been married to his wife, Janet for 42 years. She owned and operated a private dance studio, The Shawnee Academy of Ballet, in Shawnee for 34 years, prior to her retirement in 2010. The couple has two sons, both members of the Oklahoma Bar Association. Christopher Combs and Eric Combs are both associates with the Oklahoma City law firm, Foliart, Huff, Ottaway and Bottom. Justice Combs
is a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation. Justice Combs and Janet are members of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Shawnee. Justice Combs’ brother, Craig Combs is the Administrative Director of the Oklahoma Bar Association.

While a member of the judiciary, Combs has served as Presiding Judge for the North Central Judicial District and Chief Judge of the Twenty-third Judicial District. He has been active in the Oklahoma Judicial Conference, serving on the Executive Board as both a Special Judge and District Judge. He has served on the Legislative Committee for the Judicial Conference for more than 10 years. Combs served as President of the Judicial Conference in 2009. He currently serves as the Supreme Court liaison to the Judicial Conference Executive Board. He has been a member of the Oklahoma Court on the Judiciary, Appellate Division from 2011 to the present.
Justice Yvonne Kauger is a fourth generation Oklahoman from Colony, Oklahoma, who was born in Cordell on August 3, 1937. She graduated from Colony High School in 1955 as class Valedictorian. Attending Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford, she finished her undergraduate degree in three years and graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1958. Within a year after graduation, she had completed her internship at St. Anthony’s Hospital, as a certified Medical Technologist (MT.ASCP). She worked at Medical Arts Laboratory to put herself through Oklahoma City University School of Law night school. She graduated in 1969, 1st in her class. She worked as an Associate of the Law Firm of Rogers, Travis, and Jordon until 1972, when she became the first woman Judicial Assistant to her mentor, Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Ralph B. Hodges. She held that position until she was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court on March 14, 1984, by Governor George Nigh, two years after he had appointed the first woman to the Court, Justice Alma Bell Wilson. She was also adopted by the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma in 1984.

Justice Kauger, the Senior Justice of the Court, served as Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court from January 1997 to December of 1998, and she is the only woman to have served as Vice Chief Justice and Chief Justice. Kauger has served as Presiding Judge for the Court on the Judiciary, and on the Law School and Bench and Bar Committees of the Oklahoma Bar Association. She currently serves as Liaison for the Court to the Bar Association. Her activities in law school, the Oklahoma Bar Association and the Oklahoma Judiciary include: New York University Appellate Judge’s Seminar, numerous Continuing Legal Education Seminars conducted by the Oklahoma Bar Association, Member of the Oklahoma Bar Association Bench and Bar Committee, Presiding Judge Court on the Judiciary Appellate Division, American Bar Association Law School Accreditation Committee, Member of the Oklahoma and Washita County Bar Associations, Member of the State-Federal Judicial Counsel for the Western District, Member of the Dean’s Advisory Committee of the Oklahoma City University School of Law, Iota Tau Tau Legal Society, and Organizing Judicial Day at Girl’s State.

Her home was recognized as an Oklahoma Centennial Project. Kauger has received many awards including the Dean’s award for graduating first in her class at Oklahoma City University School of Law, National Delta Zeta of the year for 1988, and Oklahoma City Pioneer Award for 1989. She was the featured speaker at the Twentieth William O. Douglas Lecture Series at Gonzaga University in November 1990.
She received an honorary doctorate from OCU in 1991. She has been named a distinguished alumnus by OCU and by Southwestern Oklahoma State University. On June 7, 1999, she was awarded the Herbert Harley Award for the effective administration of justice by the American Judicature Society. She is one of only four Oklahomans to have ever received the award and the only sitting judge. In November of 1999, she was honored by the Oklahoma Bar Association with the Judicial Excellence Award.

In March, 2001, Justice Kauger was inducted into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame. On April 6, 2004, she was named one of the 10 most notable women in Oklahoma City by the Oklahoma City Orchestra League. Kauger received the Oklahoma City University Alumni Association award for distinguished community service and professionalism. She was awarded the Blyliner Award from the Oklahoma City Chapter of the Association for Women in Communications. She was a featured speaker for Esther Woman and a contributing writer to Jayne Jayroe’s book, Devote 40 Days, and an editor of the book Art of the Oklahoma Judicial Center.

She founded the Gallery of the Plains Indian in Colony and co-founded Red Earth. Justice Kauger is a member of the Episcopal Church and her hobbies include quilting, sculpting, Indian Art, and the Arts. She received the 2005 and 2012 Governor’s Art Award. In 2012, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Paseo Arts Association. Her daughter, Jonna Kauger Kirschner is a lawyer and British solicitor. She has two grandsons: Jay and Winston.
Joseph M. Watt, District No. 9

JUSTICE JOSEPH M. WATT, District 9. Watt was born on March 8, 1947, in Austin, Texas. He graduated from Austin High School in 1965, received a bachelor’s degree in history/government from Texas Tech University in 1969, and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Texas Law School in 1972.

Admitted to practice law in both Texas and Oklahoma, Watt moved to Altus, Oklahoma, in 1973, where he worked in private law practice from 1973 to 1985. He also served as Altus city prosecutor from 1973 to 1985, and as city attorney from 1980 to 1985. Watt was appointed special district judge for Jackson County in 1985, and was elected associate district judge in 1986. He served in that capacity until January 1991, when he was asked to serve as general counsel in Governor David Walters’ administration.

Watt was appointed as Justice to the Oklahoma Supreme Court on May 18, 1992. His judicial service includes vice chief justice, from 2001-2002, and Oklahoma Supreme Court Chief Justice, 2003-2004. In 2005, Chief Justice Watt was the first justice in Oklahoma history ever to be elected to an unprecedented consecutive two-year term, 2005-2006. Additional judicial service also includes Oklahoma Judicial Conference vice president, 1993 to 1994; Oklahoma Judicial Conference president elect, 1995; Oklahoma Judicial Conference president, 1996; Court on the Judiciary Appellate Division, 1997-2002; and Supreme Court Liaison to the Oklahoma Bar Association, 1997-2002; and Supreme Court Liaison to the Oklahoma Board of Bar Examiner’s, 2012-present.

His honors include the Delta Theta Phi Law Fraternity Outstanding Law Student in the Nation in 1972; University of Texas Circle of Omicron Delta Kappa National Honorary Leadership Society, 1972; Paul Harris Fellow; Graduate of the Inaugural Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation Citizens Academy, 2004; Honorary Alumnus, Oklahoma City University School of Law, 2005; and Honorary Highway Patrol Trooper, 2006. He has served as secretary and as president of the Altus Rotary Club.

Watt is a member of the Oklahoma and Texas bar associations. He is married to Cathy Watt. They have four grown children and three grandchildren.
James R. Winchester was appointed as a member of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma by Governor Frank Keating in 2000. He served as Chief Justice of the Court from January 2007 to December 2008.

A native of Clinton, Oklahoma, he received his bachelors of arts from the University of Oklahoma and his juris doctorate from Oklahoma City University.

After graduating from law school, Winchester practiced law in Western Oklahoma before being named Associate District Judge for Caddo County in January 1983. In December 1983, at age 30, he became one of the youngest district judges in the state when he was appointed by Governor George Nigh as District Judge for the Sixth Judicial District of Oklahoma.

He was named Outstanding State Trial Court Judge and is a past President of the Oklahoma Judicial Conference.

For two years, Justice Winchester served as a U.S. Administrative Law Judge in Oklahoma City and New Orleans.

Justice Winchester is a graduate of Leadership Oklahoma and the recent recipient of the Boy Scouts of America Silver Beaver Award. He resides in Chickasha, Oklahoma with his wife, Susan Winchester, and their son, Davis.
James E. Edmondson, District No. 7

In Oklahoma’s Eastern District, Edmondson served as Acting United States Attorney (1980-1981), and as Assistant U.S. Attorney (1978-1980). He also served as Muskogee County’s Assistant District Attorney (1976-1978). Edmondson received his B.A. degree from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah in 1967. He served in the United States Navy (1967-1969) before attending Georgetown University Law School where he received his law degree in 1973. In 1983, he was appointed District Judge by Governor George Nigh. For the next twenty years, he regularly held court in Wagoner, Muskogee, Cherokee, Adair, and Sequoyah counties. James Edmondson alternated annually as Chief Judge of Muskogee County with District Judges Hardy Summers, Lyle Burris, and Mike Norman. He also served as Presiding Judge of the East Central Judicial Administrative District.

In 2003, he was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court by Governor Brad Henry, succeeding Justice Summers upon his retirement. Retained on the court in 2006, he served as Chief Justice in 2009 and 2010; he was retained again in 2012.

He and his wife, Suzanne, have two grown children, Jimmy and Sarah, a granddaughter Essie, and a grandson, Jack.
Justice Reif served as Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court for 2015 and 2016. Justice Reif was appointed to the Supreme Court in October 2007 by Governor Brad Henry. He was chosen to serve on the Oklahoma Court on the Judiciary, Appellate Division, from March 1, 2011 through March 1, 2013.

Prior to his service on the Supreme Court, Justice Reif served 23 years on the Court of Civil Appeals. He started his judicial service in February 1981 as a special district judge for the Fourteenth Judicial District in Tulsa County.

Justice Reif began his legal career in 1977 with the Tulsa County District Attorney’s Office, where he worked in the civil division providing general legal services to the county. Before practicing law, he provided planning and grant assistance to law enforcement agencies in the Tulsa area through the Indian Nations Council of Governments from 1974 to 1977. Reif also served as a police officer for the City of Owasso from 1973 to 1975.

While on the bench, teaching has been Justice Reif’s way of giving back to the community. He has made over 150 presentations for Oklahoma Bar Association sponsored CLEs and community education programs. In December 2010, the Oklahoma Bar Association awarded Justice Reif the Earl Sneed Award in recognition of his continuing legal education presentations over the past thirty years. In 1995, Reif was the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from Oral Roberts University for his teaching at ORU.

From 1994 through 2001, Reif completed extensive judicial training provided by The National Judicial College, and joined the faculty of the National Tribal Judicial Center at the NJC in 2003. He presents classes in essential skills for both Appellate and Trial Court Tribal Judges at The National Judicial College. Justice Reif also is an active participant in The Sovereignty Symposium, annually presenting the ethics portion of the program.
Reif was born June 19, 1951, in Skiatook, Oklahoma. He attended high school at Cascia Hall, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, under a work study scholarship and graduated as Valedictorian of his Class of 1969. He attended the University of Tulsa, receiving his Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice in 1973, and his Juris Doctor from the College of Law in 1977. Reif was married for 35 years to Aylo (Brewer) Reif until her death in 2008.
Chief Justice Tom Colbert, the first African-American to serve on the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, was born in Oklahoma City. He graduated from Sapulpa High School, earned an associate’s degree from Eastern Oklahoma State College in 1970, and a bachelor of science degree from Kentucky State University in 1973. While at Kentucky State, Justice Colbert was named an All-American in track and field. Justice Colbert served in the United States Army and received an honorable discharge in 1975. He earned a master of education degree from Eastern Kentucky University in 1976 and taught in the public schools in Chicago. Justice Colbert received his juris doctorate from the University of Oklahoma in 1982. He was an Assistant Dean at Marquette University Law School from 1982-1984, and an Assistant District Attorney in Oklahoma County from 1984-1986, before entering private law practice at Miles-LaGrange & Colbert from 1986-1989. Justice Colbert continued his practice under the name Colbert and Associates from 1989-2000. He also served as an attorney for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services from 1988-89 and in 1999. In March of 2000, Justice Colbert became the first African-American appointed to the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals. He was appointed by Governor Frank Keating. He served as Chief Judge of that Court in 2004. On October 7, 2004, Governor Brad Henry appointed Justice Colbert to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. In January 2011, Justice Colbert was sworn in as the first African-American Vice Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. On January 1, 2013, Justice Colbert became the first African-American to be sworn in as Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Justice Colbert is a member of the American Bar Association, the National Bar Association, the Oklahoma Bar Association, and the Tulsa County Bar Association. He participates in the Track & Field Masters Level, a mentoring program for young men, and a summer reading program for children, and is a frequent speaker at schools. Justice Colbert has been honored with many distinguished awards such as: Tulsa Community College Service Award (2004), Eastern Oklahoma State College Hall of Fame (2005), Thurgood Marshall Award of Excellence (2005), OU Black Alumni Society—Trailblazer Award (2005), Kentucky State University Athletic Hall of Fame (2006), Black Heritage Trailblazer Award (2006 and 2011), St. Louis Gateway Classic Sports Foundation—Lifetime Achievement Award (2009), NABCJ—Oklahoma Criminal Justice Hall of Fame (2012), HBCU Awards—
Male Alumnus of the Year (2013), Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges—Hall of Fame (2013), Oklahoma City/County Historical Society—Pathmaker Award (2013), the Urban League—Vilona P. Cutler Award (2013), and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher Diversity Award (2013).
Justice Noma Diane Gurich was born on September 26, 1952 in South Bend, Indiana. She is serving as the Vice Chief Justice for 2017-2018. Although she is a Hoosier by birth, she is a resident of Oklahoma by choice. Justice Gurich’s great-grandparents settled near Gracemont, Oklahoma in 1904. Her grandmother and grandfather were married on December 24, 1906 in Anadarko. Her mother was born in Anadarko in 1921. She resided in Oklahoma until 1945, when she and her husband, a returning veteran of World War II, moved to Indiana.

Justice Gurich is a 1971 honors graduate of Penn High School in Mishawaka, Indiana. In 2012, she was honored as a Distinguished Alumni of her high school. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana in 1975 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and a minor in History. Justice Gurich is a life member of the Indiana State University Alumni Association. In October of 2012, she was honored as a Distinguished Alumni of Indiana State. In 1978, Justice Gurich received her Juris Doctorate degree from the College of Law of the University of Oklahoma. While at OU, she was an editor of the American Indian Law Review and received the Professional Responsibility Award. In 2016, OU College of Law inducted Justice Gruich into the Order of the Owl Hall of Fame.

Justice Noma D. Gurich has been a judge in the state of Oklahoma for over 29 years. Justice Gurich has the unique distinction of having been appointed to a judicial office by four (4) Governors of Oklahoma, after being nominated by the constitutionally created Judicial Nominating Commission.

She served for 10 years on the Oklahoma Workers’ Compensation Court and 12 ½ years as a district judge before her appointment to the Supreme Court. She served as Presiding Judge on both courts. Justice Gurich was appointed to the Supreme Court, District 3 by Governor Brad Henry on January 7, 2011. She took office on February 15, 2011. She is only the third woman justice to serve on the Supreme Court of Oklahoma since statehood.
Prior to her judicial career, Justice Gurich practiced law in Oklahoma City for 10 years. Justice Gurich is a member of the American Bar Association, Oklahoma Bar Association, Oklahoma County Bar Association, life member of the Oklahoma Judicial Conference, a sustaining Fellow of the Oklahoma Bar Foundation, and a past member of the Oklahoma Trial Judges Association. She has served on the Supreme Court Committee on Revision of the Rules for Perfecting Civil Appeals, the Oklahoma Judicial Education and Training Board, and the Oklahoma Supreme Court’s standing committee on the Uniform Civil Jury Instructions. Justice Gurich was awarded the 2002 Outstanding Committee Award for her work as 2002 Law Day Co-Chair for the Oklahoma County Bar. She received the 2003 Mona Salyer Lambird Spotlight Award from the OBA Women in Law Committee. She is a three time (2005, 2008 and 2011) Journal Record Honoree for Woman of the Year. In 2011, she was inducted into the Journal Record Woman of the Year Circle of Excellence. She received the 2013 Valuable Volunteer Award by the Foundation for OKC Public Schools.

In 2013, the Oklahoma City Chapter of the Association of Women in Communication honored Justice Gurich with a Byliner Award for Civic Leadership.

Justice Gurich is a volunteer for many community projects including the OKC Festival of the Arts, Kiwanis projects helping children in the community, advisor to the Southeast High School Key Club, and is an annual bell ringer for the Salvation Army. She serves annually on the Application Screening Committee for the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics. Justice Gurich is an active member of St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, where she has served in various leadership roles, including Chair of the Administrative Board, Chair of the Management Council and as Trustee. She is a monthly volunteer Mobile Meals driver and TV camera operator. Justice Gurich served on missions to Russia in 1993, 1997, 2000, 2002, and 2004, and to Alaska in 2016. Gurich is a member of the Salt and Light Leadership Training Class #8.

Justice Gurich is married to John E. Miley, General Counsel of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission.
Patrick Wyrick was born on March 11, 1981, in Denison, Texas. Wyrick is a fourth-generation native of Atoka County, which is home to the family business, Wyrick Lumber Company. He graduated from Atoka High School in 1999, and attended the University of Oklahoma on a baseball scholarship. After graduating from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in sociology in 2004, Wyrick entered law school at the University of Oklahoma College of Law, where he graduated with distinction in 2007.

Wyrick began his legal career in Muskogee, Oklahoma, as a law clerk to Judge James Payne, Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Oklahoma. After his one-year clerkship ended, Wyrick joined the law firm of Gable Gotwals, where he practiced general civil litigation.

In 2011, Wyrick was named Oklahoma’s first Solicitor General, and served in that position for six years under Oklahoma Attorney General E. Scott Pruitt. As Solicitor General, Wyrick was the chief appellate lawyer for the State of Oklahoma, supervising all appellate litigation on behalf of the Office of the Attorney General and directly handling appeals determined to be most significant to Oklahoma and to the development of federal and state jurisprudence. During his time as Solicitor General, Wyrick appeared in numerous high-profile cases in courts across the country, including before the U.S. Supreme Court.

On February 9, 2017, Governor Mary Fallin appointed Wyrick to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Wyrick filled the seat left vacant by the retirement of Justice Steven Taylor, who had served as a Justice since 2004.

Wyrick and his wife, Jamie, were married in 2004. They have twin boys, Cole and Carter, and a daughter, Claire.
Pictured is Justice Wyrick’s wife, Jamie, daughter, Claire, and twin sons Cole and Carter.

Pictured below is the entire Wyrick family. Both pictures were taken at Justice Wyrick’s swearing in reception in the Oklahoma Judicial Center Great Room.
Oklahoma Supreme Court Chief Justices

1907-1908  Robert L. Williams  1957-1958  Earl Welch
1909       Matthew J. Kane   1959-1960  Denver N. Davison
1910       Jesse J. Dunn     1961-1962  Ben T. Williams
1913-1914  Samuel W. Hayes  1967-1968  Floyd L. Jackson
1914-1916  Matthew J. Kane  1969-1970  Pat Irwin
1917-1918  John F. Sharp    1971-1972  William A. Berry
1921-1922  John B. Harrison 1977-1978  Ralph B. Hodges
1924       John T. Johnson   1981-1982  Pat Irwin
           Neal E. McNeill     1983-1984  Don Barnes
1925       John T. Johnson   1985-1986  Robert D. Simms
1927-1928  Fred P. Branson  1989-1990  Rudolph Hargrave
1933-1934  Fletcher Riley  1995-1996  Alma Bell Wilson
1937-1938  Monroe Osborn    1999-2000  Hardy Summers
1939-1940  Wayne W. Bayless 2001-2002  Rudolph Hargrave
1941-1942  Earl Welch       2003-2004  Joseph M. Watt
1943-1944  N. S. Corn       2005-2006  Joseph M. Watt
1945-1946  Thomas L. Gibson 2007-2008  James R. Winchester
1947-1948  Thurman S. Hurst 2009-2010  James E. Edmondson
1949-1950  Denver N. Davison 2011-2012  Steven W. Taylor
1951-1952  Ben Arnold       2013-2014  Tom Colbert
1953-1954  Harry L. S. Halley 2015-2016  John Reif
Pictured left to right are former Chief Justices: Yvonne Kauger, Joseph M. Watt, James R. Winchester, James E. Edmondson, Steven W. Taylor, Tom Colbert and John Reif

Justice Yvonne Kauger serves as the Senior Justice of the Court
The Judicial Ethics Advisory Panel serves as an entity to which questions concerning judicial ethics may be addressed. Requests may relate solely to prospective conduct which the petitioning party is concerned may violate the Code of Judicial Conduct. The panel issues advisory opinions which address only whether an intended future course of conduct is in violation of the Code. The Advisory Panel is staffed by five retired judges who have shown the highest of ethical standards, integrity, and wisdom through their service as members of the judiciary and as public servants. Currently, the members are Edward Cunningham, Bill Hetherington, April Sellers White, Tom Landrith, and Allen McCall.

Members of the Oklahoma judiciary and their staff are governed by very strict rules of ethical conduct called the Code of Judicial Conduct. Judicial officers are charged with maintaining the integrity and independence of the judiciary. No Justice or Judge may lend the prestige of the office to advance any private interest. They must refrain from participation in political activities. They may not hold offices in political organizations, make speeches for political organizations or candidates, or solicit funds for a political organization or make, directly or indirectly, contributions to political organizations or candidates. A Justice or Judge on a retention ballot may campaign only if there is active opponent opposition to retention.
Continuing Legal Education

The Oklahoma Supreme Court is committed to Continuing Legal Education (CLE) for judges and lawyers. Making great use of the restored auditorium in the Oklahoma Judicial Center, the Court, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Bar Association, has implemented a free movie night for judges and lawyers to provide CLE credit. A law related movie is shown, followed by a scholarly discussion of legal issues relating to the movie which is led by one of the Justices or Judges.

The Court has implemented mandatory judicial education. Judges are required to obtain at least twelve (12) hours of judicial education per year. Judicial education is offered at various locations and at Judicial Conferences conducted by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Administrative Office of the Courts administers the Oklahoma Court Improvement Program (CIP). CIP works to provide improved safety, permanence and well-being outcomes for Oklahoma’s deprived children through efficient court practices and computer technology. The goals of CIP include allowing courts to address fundamental problems by improving legal and judicial training and developing and improving court data systems.

Chickasaw Composer Jarod Impichchaachaaha Tate performs an original composition in sung in the Creek languauge by a select group from the Canterbury Coral Society at the 2017 Sovereignty Symosium.
Access to Justice Commission

The Oklahoma Supreme Court created the Oklahoma Access to Justice Commission by order of then Chief Justice Tom Colbert on March 13, 2014. The creation of the commission was to develop and implement policy initiatives designed to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil legal matters for low-income Oklahoma residents. The Commission is to serve as an umbrella organization for all efforts to expand access to justice in civil matters in Oklahoma. Nationally, Oklahoma joins approximately 38 other states with active Access to Justice Commissions.

Currently, M. David Riggs of the Tulsa law firm Riggs, Abney serves as chairman of the commission, currently comprised of 12 members; Attorney M. David Riggs, Chairman, Chief Justice Combs, President Howard G. Barnett, Jr., Oklahoma State University Tulsa, Attorney Lewis Berkowitz, District Judge Aletia Timmons, Associate District Judge Rick Bozarth, Director of the Lobeck-Taylor Family Advocacy Clinic Anna Carpenter, University of Tulsa, Attorney Tricia Everest, Michael Figgins of Legal Aid of Oklahoma, Neal A. McCaleb of the Chickasaw Nation, Attorney Ethan Shaner, and Former Speaker of The Oklahoma House of Representatives Kris Steele. The Commission also includes appointees of the President Pro-Tem of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives which are vacant.

Supreme Court Language Access

The Oklahoma Supreme Court and the State Board of Examiners of Certified Courtroom Interpreters officially launched the Court Interpreter Program in the spring of 2015. The purpose of this program is to help the public and the Oklahoma courts locate and provide qualified spoken-language interpreters, and to ensure equal access to justice for all individuals regardless of their ability to communicate in the spoken English language. What began with 18 newly-enrolled Registered Courtroom Interpreters now includes 38 speaking German, Mandarin Chinese, Persian Farsi, and Spanish. The Registry of Registered Courtroom Interpreters is available on the Courtroom Interpreter section of OSCN. A registered Courtroom Interpreter in Oklahoma is then eligible to take the oral examination to become a Certified Courtroom Interpreter. Certification as a court interpreter indicates the highest skill level and tests the interpreter in all three modes of court interpreting (consecutive, simultaneous, and sight translation). Currently, there are 8 Certified Interpreters listed on the Supreme Court’s Registry of Certified Interpreters. There are also 22 Provisional Foreign Language Interpreters which also speak Arabic, and Vietnamese languages in addition to the other languages listed.
The Oklahoma Judicial Nominating Commission (JNC) was established in 1967, by an amendment to the Oklahoma Constitution. Prompted by the Oklahoma Supreme Court scandal of the early 1960’s, the creation of the JNC was part of a nationwide reform movement, begun in Missouri in 1940, toward the merit selection, rather than the election, of some or all judges. The JNC, which went into operation in 1969, nominates candidates for appointment by the Governor to fill judicial vacancies.

The JNC has fifteen members who serve without compensation. Six of the members are lawyers, one elected by the members of the bar from each of the six congressional districts as they existed in 1967. The six lawyers are elected for six year terms, staggered at two year intervals.

Nine members are nonlawyers. Six are appointed by the Governor, one from each of the “old” congressional districts, to serve staggered six year terms. Of the six members named by the Governor, not more than three can belong to any one political party and none can have a lawyer from any state in their immediate family. The three remaining nonlawyer members serve a two year term as Members At-Large. One is appointed by the Senate President Pro Tempore, one is appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and one is selected by the other members of the Commission. Of the three At-Large members, not more than two can be from the same political party. The JNC annually elects one of its members to serve as chairman for a one year term.

The JNC was designed to be as free from partisan influence as possible. Besides limiting the number of lay members who may belong to any one political party, the Constitution provides that no Commissioner can hold any other public office by election or appointment or any official position in a political party. No Commissioner is eligible, while a member of the Commission and for five years thereafter, for nomination as a Judicial Officer. Nor may a Commissioner succeed himself or herself. The current members are:

**Lay Members Appointed by the Governor:** Ed Crocker, Lee Evans, D.B. Green, David Huddiburg, Gill Luton, and Steve Turnbo.

**At-Large Elected by Commission:** Dr. Jim Miller.

**At-Large Appointed by Senate President Pro Tempore:** Daryl Woodard

**At-Large Appointed by Speaker of the House of Representatives:** Ronny Eaves

**Attorneys Elected by the Lawyers in their District:** Melissa DeLacerda, Michael C. Mordy, Deborah Reheard, Peggy Stockwell, John H. Tucker, and Jim Webb.
**Board of Judicial Compensation**

Judicial salaries are determined by the Board of Judicial Compensation which is codified in 20 O.S. 2011 §§ 20-3.1-3.4. Every odd numbered year, the Board meets to review the compensation paid to members of the state judiciary and, if necessary, recommend changes. It considers other states, the region, the value of services in the private sector, compensation of attorneys in the private and public sectors, compensation of other state, county, and municipal officials, and changes to the cost of living.

The Board is comprised of seven members from various fields such as labor and civic organizations, communications media, retail business, manufacturing and professional fields, and agriculture. No more than four members are allowed to be from the same political party. Two members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, two members by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, two members by the Governor, and one member by the Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The current board is comprised of:

- **Appointed by Speaker of the House:**
  - Ty Tyler
  - Doug Williams

- **Appointed by the Governor:**
  - Brenda Barwick, Secretary
  - William W. “Bill” Frankfurt, III

- **Appointed by President Pro Tempore of the Senate:**
  - Vacancy
  - David W. Pitts, Chairman

- **Appointed by the Chief Justice:**
  - Dr. Donnie Nero

**Oklahoma Council on Judicial Complaints**

Although Justices and judges may be initially screened by the Judicial Nominating Commission, the Oklahoma Council on Judicial Complaints provides a formal process for removal in the event of misconduct. The Council receives and investigates allegations of judicial misconduct and when appropriate can recommend intervention or discipline by the Supreme Court or the removal or mandatory retirement of a judge by the Court on the Judiciary. The Council has jurisdiction to investigate the conduct of all persons subject to the Oklahoma Code of Judicial Conduct, including state, municipal and administrative judges. Members: Glen D. Huff, Chairman; Jerry Franklin, Vice-Chairman; and Cathy Christensen, Member. Staff: Eric Mitts, Director and Terry West, General Counsel. Complaint forms and instructions may be obtained from the Council at the address and phone numbers listed below: 1901 North Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105; Office: (405) 522-4800; Toll Free in State: (877) 873-7468; Fax: (405) 522-4752.
In addition to providing free CLE, the Supreme Court and The Sovereignty Symposium, Inc., sponsor The Sovereignty Symposium annually. This gathering is recognized as the premier conference in the country on Indian Law. The curriculum features comprehensive coverage of legal issues involving indigenous peoples. Lectures and open discussions leave attendees, as well as the bench and practicing bar, with a better understanding of the historical perspective and the contemporary legal issues facing tribal, state, and federal governments. The Sovereignty Symposium was established to provide a forum in which ideas concerning common legal issues could be exchanged in a scholarly, non-adversarial environment. The Supreme Court espouses no view on any of the issues, and the positions taken by the participants are not endorsed by the Court. The Ed Edmondson Scholarship ensures participation for those who wish to attend; the Chief Justice John B. Doolin Writing Competition awards a cash prize for the best student papers; the Susan J. Ferrell Scholarship is an all expense paid scholarship awarded on merit; and the Hargrave Prize recognizes the best faculty paper. The current Board is comprised of Allison Cave, President, Julie Rorie, Judge Aletia Timmons, David Dixon, and Selden Jones.

Left: The late Justice Rudolph Hargrave, Perennial Master of Ceremonies

Center: The Barroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne, Keynote Speaker

Right: Larry Echo Hawk and Ada Deer participating in a round table discussion.

The Sovereignty Symposium 2017 Event Staff

The Sovereignty Symposium Color Guards

The Kiowa Black Leggings Society Honor Guard (Ton-Kon-Gah), was re-established in 1958 to honor veterans. Gus Palmer, with his brothers George and Dixon, revived the Kiowa military society tradition to honor their brother Lyndreth, who was killed in battle during WWII. The Black Leggings have presented the United States and Oklahoma flags at each Sovereignty Symposium, since in 1988.

Black Leggings regalia remains unchanged. A black string shawl is worn at the waist. Legs are covered with black paint or black leggings from the knees down, and a cape is draped over the shoulders. The cape is worn in honor of Gool-hay-ee, Palmer’s great-grandfather, who killed a Mexican officer in battle and took his cape as a war trophy. The Black Leggings Society still has possession of the original cape. Members also carry a decorated lance or spear. The adornment is a personal statement of individual military experience. Gus Palmer had 21 eagle feathers on his lance, representing the 21 bombing missions he made during WWII. Ton-Kon-Gah members have served in every major United States conflict.

Dixon Palmer, a member of the Black Leggings for 52 years, was born in a tipi on his grandmother’s allotment just west of Anadarko. He served with the 45th Infantry Division in WWII, logging 511 days in combat earning two Silver Stars, and three Bronze Stars.

He was a National Champion War Dancer who also gained world renown for his skill in making war bonnets, including those worn by the Black Leggings.

All original Black Leggings members have received the Sovereignty Symposium Honored One medal. Dixon was honored individually, and was the subject of Mike Larsen’s 2009 poster.
Charles Chibitty was the last surviving Comanche Code Talker. He earned the World War II Victory Medal and the European Theater of Operations Victory Medal with five Bronze Stars, and the Chevalier de l’Ordre National du Mérite by the French Government. In 1999, he received the Knowlton Award from the Military Intelligence Corps Association, and in 2005, he was the Honored One for The Sovereignty Symposium. The Navajo Code Talkers were honored in 1993, and the Chickasaw Astronaut, Commander John Herrington, was recognized in 2006.

The Vietnam Era Color Guard honored The Symposium with its presence from 1989 - 2014. Pictured with Justice O’Connor are Walter Larney, Mark McKenzie, the late Jerry Riley, and Shawn Mark. Also pictured are former Chief Judge of the Tenth Circuit and President of Oklahoma City University, Robert Henry, and Julie Rorie, The Symposium coordinator. Pictured bottom left, John T. McIntosh, an original member of the Color Guard.
United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O’Connor (ret.) returned to The Sovereignty Symposium to speak for the third time in 2013. Since retiring from the Court, Justice O’Connor devotes her time to restoring civic lessons in the lives of school children throughout the United States, and to the promotion of an independent judiciary. In 2009, she founded iCivics to reverse Americans’ declining civic knowledge and participation. Securing our democracy, she realized, requires teaching the next generation to understand and respect our system of governance. Embracing technology, iCivics has been instrumental in developing civics lessons through video and online games, making the information fun to learn. The nation’s most comprehensive, standards-aligned civics curriculum is free on the Web at www.icivics.org.

In the fall of 2014, United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor came to Oklahoma to meet, at her request, with Oklahoma Tribal Leaders at the Oklahoma Judicial Center. Her visit included stops at Oklahoma City University Law School, Tulsa University College of Law and the University of Oklahoma College of Law. An honorary luncheon provided by The Sovereignty Symposium was held in her honor and she personally met every person in attendance and addressed the group in a short luncheon program. Pictured below is Justice Sotomayor with the Oklahoma’s Tribal Leaders in attendance.

Pictured left to right: Chairperson Gary Pratt, Chief Ron Sparkman, Chief Bill Follis, Chief Paula Pechonick, President Clifford Peacock, Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Governor Edwina Butler-Wolfe, Chairman Wallace Coffey, Governor Bill Anoatubby, Principal Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear, Governor Eddie Hamilton, Principia Chief George Tiger, President Terri Parton, Chief Tarpie Yargee, and Jim Collard
The Ralph B. Hodges – Robert E. Lavender Award of Judicial Excellence

In 2012, the Oklahoma Supreme Court inaugurated the Ralph B. Hodges – Robert E. Lavender Award for Judicial Excellence. They were appointed to the Court in 1965 by Governor Henry Bellmon in the wake of the Oklahoma Supreme Court scandals of the 1960’s. They restored the honor, dignity and credibility of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Justice Hodges was the youngest man ever to serve on the Court. He was the recipient of the Media and Society Award given by the H.H. Herbert School of Journalism and Mass Communications for his efforts to allow cameras and microphones into Oklahoma courtrooms and he was named Appellate Justice of the year in 1976. Justice Lavender served on the Court for forty-two years, longer than any Justice. He was recognized as a distinguished alumnus of the University of Tulsa.

The Awardees of the Ralph B. Hodges and Robert E. Lavender Award are:

2012 Court of Civil Appeals Judge Carol M. Hansen
2013 District Judge Donald Worthington
2014 Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Rita Strubar
2015 Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Charles Johnson.
2016 Court of Civil Appeals Judge Keith Rapp
2017 Supreme Court Justice Steven Taylor
In carrying out its work, the Supreme Court is assisted by staff

Each Justice is authorized to hire two full-time lawyers and one administrative assistant. The clerical support staff is responsible for handling the individual Justice’s calendars, preparing the dockets for Monday and Thursday Conferences, circulating proposed opinions and orders, and numerous other office duties. The Justice’s Judicial Assistants are highly qualified career lawyers who aid the Justice in researching and drafting proposed opinions. Occasionally, legal interns assist the various chambers and receive law school credit for the semester.

In addition to the regular staff, a central staff also assists the Chief Justice. Central staff consists of a Court Marshal, four referees with two administrative assistants, and a Court receptionist. The Court Clerk is also part of this central staff, although the Clerk also serves the entire Court as well. Currently, one of the referees also acts as the Court’s Marshal and is often called upon by lawyers to answer procedural questions. The Chief’s office, through the assistance of staff acts as the Court’s record-keeper for the number and kinds of cases that the Court handles each year, and drafts and issues orders as directed by the Court. The referees, all attorneys, evaluate hundreds of petitions for certiorari and they are called upon to conduct oral arguments and hearings which are not appropriate for hearing by the entire Court.

Supreme Court Administrative Assistants (left to right): Kelley Middaugh, Vickie Campbell, Katie Craig, Jana Huff, Angela McAllister, and Lynne Kile
Supreme Court Referees and Judicial Assistants
Row 4 (left to right): Michael Elliott, Kyle Shifflett, Kate Dodoo, and Dallas Coplin
Row 3 (left to right): Barbara Swimley, John Holden, Jana Knott, and Jill Van Edmond
Row 2 (left to right): Daniel Karem, Marissa Lane, Selden Jones
Row 1 (left to right): Ann Hadrava, Paul White, Kyle Rogers and John Turner
THE CLERK OF THE SUPREME COURT

Pursuant to the Okla. Const. art. 7, §5 “the Supreme Court appoints the Clerk of the Supreme Court who serves at the pleasure of the Supreme Court and who performs the duties mandated by law and by the rules of the Supreme Court.” The Clerk attends all sessions of the Court held in the Courtroom, calls the Court to session, maintains official hearing records, operates recording and timing equipment, and ensures that proper courtroom procedures are observed. The Clerk is the Court’s record-keeper. The Clerk maintains operational contact with the parties and attorneys for all cases. The Clerk’s office is the repository for all filings made in connection with any case. The Clerk also serves as the Clerk of the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Court of Civil Appeals, the Court of the Judiciary, and the Court of Tax Review.

Clerk of the Supreme Court and Staff (left to right): Tom Eberle, Glenda Burris, Patrick Eberle, Tara Strumbaugh, Michael Richie, Daniel Moore, LaDonna Johnson, Polly Engelbert, and Lloyd Williams

Not Pictured: Cynde Robertson

Micheal Richie retired at the end of July, 2017 and pictured on the right is the new Clerk, John Hadden.

In August of 2017, Michael Richie retired and John Hadden became the Clerk of the Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts

Pursuant to the Okla. Const. art. 7, §5, the Supreme Court appoints an administrative director and staff who serves at its pleasure to assist the Chief Justice in administrative duties and to assist the Judiciary.

The Administrative Director of the Courts and staff, under supervision of the Chief Justice and the Court, coordinate judicial operations and personnel throughout the state handling payroll, training, data systems, research and other responsibilities. Additionally, the Administrative Office of the Courts provides leadership and administrative support for the Judicial Nominating Commission, the Oklahoma Children’s Court Improvement Program, Board of Certified Interpreters and the recently established Oklahoma Access to Justice Commission.

Jari Askins, a native of Duncan, Oklahoma, is the Administrative Director of the Courts. She has served the State in every branch of government and in many capacities including: Special Advisor to the Governor for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board, Associate Provost for External Relations at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Lieutenant Governor, State Representative, Deputy General Counsel of the Office of the Governor, and Special Judge.

Pictured Above Jari Askins

Pictured Below (left to right)

Last Row: Michael Smith, Tim Brian Davis, Tim Scott

Middle Row 3: Dennis Leehan, Phil Johnson, Deborah Charles, Lauren Fagala, Marylin Anderson, Joseph French

First Row: Felice Hamilton, Kinsey Hicks, Lisa Baker
The Oklahoma Supreme Court and www.oscn.net

The Oklahoma Supreme Court established the “Oklahoma Supreme Court Network” (OSCN), an internet-based service designed to provide the public and the Bar with access to the public legal documents of the state of Oklahoma.

OSCN is now one of the largest freely available repositories of legal information on the Internet. OSCN is widely used as an information source. On average over 700,000 pages are viewed daily by users from all walks of life. In addition to the legal community, the media as well as business and private entities benefit from the information data provided by OSCN at no cost to the public. Thousands of published Oklahoma appellate cases are available on the web site, as well as the Oklahoma Statutes. Attorney General’s opinions, certiorari dispositions, court rules, forms, and many other types of documents are also included.

OSCN provides a fielded search system for all of the documents within its databases, similar to that offered by such vendors as Westlaw or Lexis. OSCN also provides a service entitled “The Citationizer” for tracking and checking citations to case law, similar to services provided by Shepard’s. Finally, OSCN provides same day new decision service for the Oklahoma Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals.

Oklahoma’s move to public domain citation and web publication of documents has generated a great deal of positive feedback, both from the Bar and the public at large. The Daily Oklahoman, Oklahoma City’s daily newspaper, ran an in-depth front page article on OSCN, and the Court’s actions have been covered by numerous publications, including Cnet.com, The National Law Journal, and The Journal Record. The Court has received the “Site Patrol” Award from Microsoft.com, “Best of the Net” Award from the Mining Co., and OSCN is listed as a “well done court site” at Courts.net. The address for OSCN is http://www.oscn.net.
The Management Information Services Department (MIS) operates as a department of the Administrative Office of the Courts. MIS is responsible for automation and data management for all appellate and district courts within the State of Oklahoma. The Department is also responsible for the implementation and operation of OSCN.

Pictured Front Row (left to right): Frank Holdsclaw, Tom Bonadio, Dajanae Berry, Arelis Pato, Dawn Helliker, Vera Nushtaeva, Pooja Tipi, Geral Crabbe
Second Row: Jeff Schutt, Susan Berry, Dee Mclanahan, Mike siscoe, James Lupton, Sri Puttheti
Third Row: Aaron DeLeon, Terry Ellis, Gary Carter, Randy Thompson, James Hixon, Sherry Jenkins, Amber Litrell, Layne Dunn
Fourth Row: Max Guevra, Christopher Zabawa, Kaleb Robertson, Scott Jacofsky, Josh Butler, Darrell Mason, Scott McClure, Russ Reagan, Tad Chapman, Steve Ingraham
Fifth Row: Rickie Kemmitz, Chris White, Preston Smith, Matt Cook, Brad Wynn
Last Row: Chord Spence, Joseph Varghese, Nick garde, James Olds, Timothy Luers
Left to Right: Presiding Judge Gary Lumpkin, Vice-Presiding Judge David B. Lewis. Judge Dana Kuehn, Judge Robert Hudson, and Judge Scott Rowland
Judge Dana Kuehn was appointed to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals on October 2, 2017 by Governor Mary Fallin to fill the unexpired term of Judge Clancy Smith. A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, she attended Oklahoma State University, receiving a Bachelors Degree in Political Science in 1993. Judge Kuehn was a top-ten graduate of the OSU College of Arts and Sciences and a member of Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority of which she served as President. She received her Juris Doctorate from the University of Tulsa College of Law in 1996. After graduating law school, Judge Kuehn was a felony prosecutor for almost ten years with the Tulsa County District Attorney’s Office. As lead counsel, she tried more than 75 cases. She headed the Crimes Against Children Unit and also served as Chief of the Juvenile Division. She was an Associate with the firm of Steidley & Neal from 1999-2000.

In 2006, Judge Kuehn was elected Associate District Judge of Tulsa County. She presided over a felony docket and conducted more than 75 jury trials. In that capacity, she also worked closely with Women In Recovery for alternative sentencing options for women. Judge Kuehn then presided over a civil docket from 2008 to 2017 conducting more than 100 jury trials. Judge Kuehn served as Chief of the Civil Division at Tulsa County from 2010 through 2012. She teaches a Juvenile Law and Evidence Workshop at the University of Tulsa College of Law. She is past president of the Alumnae Board and was selected Outstanding Junior Alumnae. In May 2017, she was inducted into the Tulsa College of Law Hall of Fame and received the Thomas Coffman Community Service Award.

Judge Kuehn is an active member of the Tulsa County Bar Association and Oklahoma Bar Association. She is a recipient of the 2016 Mona Salyer Lambird Spotlight Award. In 2017, the American Board of Trial Advocates recognized her as Judge of the Year for the State of Oklahoma.

Judge Kuehn is a proud mother of four boys and wife of Patrick Kuehn. She is a Youth Deacon at her family’s church, Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian. Her favorite past-times are volunteering for her children’s school and sports teams, cheering on the Oklahoma State Cowboys, and reading history.
Robert L. Hudson, District No. 2

Robert L. Hudson was born in Guthrie, Oklahoma, and graduated from Guthrie High School in 1975. He graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1980 with a double major in Agricultural Economics and Accounting. He earned his Juris Doctorate from the University Of Oklahoma School Of Law in 1983. After graduating from law school, Judge Hudson was in the private practice of law in Guthrie, Oklahoma from 1983 to 1996. In April of 1996 he was appointed by then Governor Frank Keating as District Attorney for Payne and Logan Counties, a post he was re-elected to four consecutive terms. In 2011, Judge Hudson left the District Attorney’s Office and accepted the position of First Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Attorney General. In November of 2012, he became Special Judge in the 9th Judicial District, where he served the citizens of Logan and Payne Counties for over two years before being appointed to the Court of Criminal Appeals by Governor Mary Fallin in April of 2015.

Among Judge Hudson’s achievements, honors and awards, in 1980 he was named OSU’s College of Agriculture’s Most Outstanding Graduate and one of OSU’s Top five Graduating Senior Men. While in law school, he was a member of the 1983 Regional Winning National Mock Trial Team. In 2000 and 2011, he was named the state’s Outstanding District Attorney by the Oklahoma District Attorneys Association, and served two terms as President of the Oklahoma District Attorneys Association (2000 & 2008). Judge Hudson is a member of Leadership Oklahoma Class XVII. He served as a Commissioner for the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation for nearly ten years. Judge Hudson has been married for thirty-three years. His wife, Mary Hughes Hudson, of Bartlesville, is a school teacher. They have five adult children and numerous grandchildren. Judge Hudson also owns and operates a wheat and cow-calf operation in the Guthrie area. He is a Deacon in the First Southern Baptist Church of Guthrie.
Judge Gary L. Lumpkin was appointed to the Court on November 15, 1988. A native of Sentinel, Oklahoma, he graduated from Weatherford High School. Judge Lumpkin attended Northwestern State College and graduated from Southwestern State College in 1968 with a degree in Business Administration. He received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Oklahoma School of Law in 1974. He served in the United States Marine Corps from 1968-1971, serving 18 months in Vietnam. He retired in 1998 with the rank of Colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve. Judge Lumpkin worked as staff attorney for the Oklahoma Department of Consumer Affairs and Assistant District Attorney. He served as Associate District Judge and District Judge for the 20th Judicial District, Madill, 1982-1989. He is married and has one child.
Scott Rowland, District No. 4

Judge Scott Rowland was appointed to the Court of Criminal Appeals, District No. 4, in November of 2017 by Governor Mary Fallin. He grew up in Wynnewood graduating from high school there in 1983, and then earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism/Political Science from the University of Oklahoma in 1987. After earning his Juris Doctorate cum laude from Oklahoma City University School of Law in 1994, Judge Rowland served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Oklahoma, General Counsel to the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and for eleven years as First Assistant District Attorney in the Oklahoma County District Attorney’s Office.

He has lectured throughout the United States on various areas of criminal constitutional procedure, authored numerous articles on Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendment law, and has been an adjunct instructor of criminal and constitutional law at Oklahoma State University at Oklahoma City since 1998. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Hall of Fame in 2016, named outstanding Adjunct Faculty at OSU-OKC in 2017, Outstanding Oklahoma Prosecutor for 2013 by the Oklahoma District Attorneys’ Association, and State Prosecutor of the Year for 2001 and 2004 by the Association of Oklahoma Narcotic Enforcers. He and his wife, Shannon, live in Oklahoma City with their daughters Caroline and Emma.
Judge David B. Lewis was born in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Governor Brad Henry appointed him as Judge on the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals on August 4, 2005. He served as Presiding Judge for 2013-2014 and currently serves as Vice Presiding Judge. Lewis earned a bachelor’s degree with high honors from the University of Oklahoma in 1980 and earned his law degree from the University of Oklahoma College of Law in 1983. He served four years as a Comanche County prosecutor, after four years in private practice. Lewis served as Comanche County special judge from 1991 to 1999. He was a district judge for Comanche, Stephens, Jefferson and Cotton counties from 1999 to 2005. He formerly served as President of the Comanche County Bar Association. He has served as president of the Oklahoma Judicial Conference and is a fellow of the Oklahoma Bar Foundation. He is also a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and a member of the American Bar Association. Lewis was selected as a member of the Class of 2008 Henry Toll Fellowship Program of the Council of State Governments. He was inducted into the Order of the Owl at the University of Oklahoma College of Law in 2017. Lewis serves on the Board of Visitors of the University of Oklahoma College of Law, and is co-chair of the Bench and Bar Committee of the Oklahoma Bar Association. Lewis also serves on the Board of Directors for Girls Scouts of Western Oklahoma, and served as chairman of Reach Out and Read Oklahoma. Lewis has two children – a son, David Jr., and a daughter, Danielle.
Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals Staff

Back Row (left to right):  David Bugg, Melanie Stucky, Patty Moore-Grotta, Jake Burks, Brant Elmore
Third Row (left to right):  Donna Way, Patty Frakes, Bryan Dupler, Seth Branham, Pete Gelvin
Second Row (left to right):  Suzanne Heggy, Caroline Mitchell, Gaylene Henley, Lee Cohlmia, Allen Smith, Tina Percival
First Row (left to right):  Lendell Blosser, Molly Reid, Carla Odom, Elizabeth Bridgers, Lou Kohlman, Cheryl Harris
Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals

Oklahoma City

Division I

Larry E. Joplin

Kenneth L. Buettner
Chief Judge

Division III

E. Bay Mitchell, III

Barbara Swinton

Robert D. Bell

Retired Judges


Joseph Young 1983-1985
Carol M. Hansen 1985-2011

James P. Garrett 1987-2001
Glenn D. Adams 1990-2009

William Heatherington 2009-2016

Erin McGregor, Oklahoma Capitol Photographer
Travis Caperton, Oklahoma Capitol Photographer

Erin McGregor, Oklahoma Capitol Photographer

Erin McGregor, Oklahoma Capitol Photographer

Erin McGregor, Oklahoma Capitol Photographer
Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals

Tulsa
Division II

Deborah B. Barnes

John F. Fischer
Division IV

Jane P. Wiseman

P. Thomas Thornbrugh
Vice Chief Judge

W. Keith Rapp

Retired Judges

Kenneth D. Bacon 1971-1992
J. Douglas Gabbard, II 2005-2011
Wm C. Hetherington 2009-2016

Ronald J. Stubblefield 1983-2005
Joe C. Taylor 1993-2005
Court of Civil Appeals Staff

Tulsa Divisions II and IV Back Row (left to right): Tom Dalton, Martin Halstead, Tosha Sharpe, Cristina Romero, Sandra Jarvis, Lora Montross, Robert Cunningham, Michael Klenda, and Ashley Smith
Front Row (left to right): Rhonda Wallace, Emily duensing, Beth Reynolds, and Tammie Goodell
Not Pictured: Cathy Cullem, Judy Parks

Oklahoma City Divisions I and III Back Row (left to right): Christi Crowder, Lu Willis, Linda Ellason, Cher Patterson, Amanda Nixon, Donnie Lynn
Front Row (left to right): Susan Beaty, Debbie Clark, Shannon Panach, Kimberly Carlson, Bevan Graybill, Jennifer Lee, Merideth Wolfe, Chris Ruggiers
Judges of the District Court

The majority of the judiciary in Oklahoma is composed of Judges of the District Court. Often these Judges serve as the first contact a party may have with the judicial system. District Court Judges hear both civil and criminal matters, and they are the backbone of the judiciary. Appeals from the District Courts in civil matters are considered by the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Appeals in criminal matters from the District Courts are considered by the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals.

Nine Presiding Judges are elected by their peers to assist in the administration of Oklahoma’s trial courts. These judges, representing separate geographic areas, meet monthly with members of the Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals to discuss the administration of justice and any developments affecting Oklahoma’s judiciary. These meetings provide an effective forum for exchanging information by and between the trial judges and appellate judges.

Oklahoma Trial Court Presiding Judges

SOUTHEASTERN
Mark Campbell
District Judge
Bryan County

NORTH-CENTRAL
Phillip Ross
District Judge
Kay County

OKLAHOMA-CANADIAN
Timothy R. Henderson
District Judge
Oklahoma County

TULSA-PAWNEE
Rebecca Nightingale
District Judge
Tulsa County

NORTHWEST
Jon K. Parsley
District Judge
Texas County

SOUTHWESTERN
Gerald Neuwirth
District Judge
Comanche County

EAST-CENTRAL
Douglas Golden
District Judge
Creek County

NORTHEASTERN
Terry McBride
District Judge
Mayes County

SOUTH-CENTRAL
Steve Kessinger
District Judge
Ponatoc County
Ken Adair  
District Judge 
Okmulgee County  
(918) 756-0674

Don Andrews  
District Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1171

Cindy Ferrell Ashwood  
District Judge  
Lincoln County  
(405) 258-1399

Thad Balkman  
District Judge  
Cleveland County  
(405) 329-2400

Mark Campbell  
District Judge  
Bryan County  
(580) 924-3450

John G. Canavan  
District Judge  
Pottawatomie County  
(405) 275-1296

Daman H. Cantrell  
District Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5390

Martha Rupp Carter  
District Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5904

Kendra Coleman  
District Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1420

Sheila A. Condren  
District Judge  
Rogers County  
(918) 923-4968

Wallace Coppedge  
District Judge  
Marshall County  
(580) 795-3392

Phillip C. Corley  
District Judge  
Payne County  
(405) 372-3624

Heather Coyle  
District Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1107

Michael D. DeBerry  
District Judge  
McCurtain County  
(580) 286-2171

Barry V. Denney  
District Judge  
Delaware County  
(918) 253-4329

Douglas E. Drummond  
District Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5300

Leah Edwards  
District Judge  
McClain County  
(405) 527-6432

Justin P. Filer  
District Judge  
Woodward County  
(580) 256-6716
Todd Hicks
Associate District Judge
Love County
(580) 276-3373

S. Wyatt Hill
Associate District Judge
Caddo County
(405) 247-5585

Clark E. Huey
Associate District Judge
Jackson County
(580) 482-3155

Bob Hughley
Associate District Judge
Canadian County
(405) 264-5530

Lori L. Jackson
Associate District Judge
Pontotoc County
(580) 332-8940

Clark Jett
Associate District Judge
Texas County
(580) 338-3833

Gregory L Johnson
Associate District Judge
Marshall County
(580) 795-3392

Christopher Kelly
Associate District Judge
Washita County
(580) 832-3226

Steven Kendall
Associate District Judge
Garvin County
(405) 238-2542

Josh King
Associate District Judge
Cherokee County
(405) 713-1433

Richard Kirby
Associate District Judge
Oklahoma County
(405) 258-1254

Stephen R Kistler
Associate District Judge
Payne County
(405) 372-3999

Allison Lafferty
Associate District Judge
Blaine County
(580) 544-2471

Christine Marie Larson
Associate District Judge
Cimarron County
(580) 336-2433

Nikki G Leach
Associate District Judge
Noble County
(580) 726-3594

Rick Marsh
Associate District Judge
Kiowa County
(580) 264-5530

Jennifer McAffrey
Associate District Judge
Ottawa County
(405) 258-1254
Norman D. Thygesen
Associate District Judge
Muskogee County
(918) 683-7786

Russell Vaclaw
Associate District Judge
Washington County
(918) 337-2885

F. Pat VerSteeg
Associate District Judge
Roger Mills County
(580) 497-3359

Jana Kay Wallace
Associate District Judge
Pushmataha County
(580) 298-2553

W. Mike Warren
Associate District Judge
Harmon County
(580) 688-2553

Kyle E. Waters
Associate District Judge
Sequoyah County
(918) 775-4262

Bill D. Welch
Associate District Judge
Latimer County
(918) 465-2071

Eric G. Yarborough
Associate District Judge
Greer County
(580) 782-4020

Z. Joseph Young
Associate District Judge
Grady County
(405) 224-5314

OKLAHOMA TRIAL COURT JUDGES - SPECIAL JUDGES

Robin W. Adair
Special Judge
Muskogee County
(918) 683-2997

Christopher Anderson
Special Judge
Seminole County
---

Mindy Beare
Special Judge
Pittsburg County
(918) 423-6651

Terry H. Bitting
Special Judge
Tulsa County
(918) 596-8750

Timothy A. Brauer
Special Judge
Grady County
(405) 224-5564

Gary L. Brock
Special Judge
Mccurtain County
(580) 286-2171
Jennifer Brock  
Special Judge  
Kay County  
(580) 362-2445

Scott Brockman  
Special Judge  
Cleveland County  
(405) 447-3737

Carson M. Brooks  
Special Judge  
Carter County  
(580) 223-4750

Tammy Bruce  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5354

David Cawthon  
Special Judge  
Pottawatomie County  
(405) 273-0971

Stephen R Clark  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5374

April Collins  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1181

Sandy Crosslin  
Special Judge  
Cherokee County  
(918) 456-8252

Terrell S Crosson  
Special Judge  
Rogers County  
(918) 923-4966

William E. Culver  
Special Judge  
Ottawa County  
(918) 542-2788

Julie Doss  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5330

Theresa Dreiling  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-8470

Owen Evans  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5314

Kyra K Franks  
Special Judge  
Washington County  
(918) 337-2880

Charles Gass  
Special Judge  
Canadian County  
(405) 295-6049

Lydia Y. Green  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-6754

David Guten  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5364

Barry L Hafar  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1167
Deborah Ludi Leitch
Special Judge
Tulsa County
(918) 596-5347

John Luton
Special Judge
Wagoner County
--

Jennifer H McBee
Special Judge
Leflore County
(918) 647-8206

Mark McCormick
Special Judge
Oklahoma County
(405) 713-7103

Kevin C. McCray
Special Judge
Oklahoma County
(405) 713-1185

Lynne McGuire
Special Judge
Oklahoma County
(405) 713-1113

Brian McLaughlin
Special Judge
Pittsburg County
--

J. Anthony Miller
Special Judge
Tulsa County
(918) 596-5394

Trisha A Misak
Special Judge
Garvin County
(405) 238-6561

Charles Kevin Morrison
Special Judge
Tulsa County
(918) 596-5380

Emily Mueller
Special Judge
Pottawatomie County
(405) 273-0971

Jequita H. Napoli
Special Judge
Cleveland County
(405) 329-5733

Martha Oakes
Special Judge
Oklahoma County
(405) 713-1116

Matt Orendorff
Special Judge
Sequoyah County
(918) 775-4613

Kirsten Pace
Special Judge
Tulsa County
(918) 596-5345

Wilma Palmer
Special Judge
Tulsa County
(918) 596-5909

Cindy Pickerill
Special Judge
Osage County
--

Robert Trent Pipes
Special Judge
Oklahoma County
(405) 713-7104
Greg Pollard  
Special Judge  
Pontotoc County  
(580) 332-8940

Lori A Puckett  
Special Judge  
Cleveland County  
(405) 360-9393

Pandee Ramirez  
Special Judge  
Okmulgee County  
(918) 756-0672

Tom Riesen  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-6763

Abby Rogers  
Special Judge  
Bryan County  
--

Lara M Russell  
Special Judge  
Rogers County  
(918) 923-4963

Gregory J Ryan  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1460

Kathryn Savage  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1121

April Seibert  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5388

Jason Seigars  
Special Judge  
Garfield County  
--

Larry Shaw  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1466

Grant Sheperd  
Special Judge  
Comanche County  
--

Leland Shilling  
Special Judge  
Mcclain County  
(405) 527-4539

Jared Sigler  
Special Judge  
Washington County  
(918) 337-2880

David Smith  
Special Judge  
Rogers County  
(918) 923-4965

Rodney Sparkman  
Special Judge  
Tulsa County  
(918) 596-5318

David A Stephens  
Special Judge  
Caddo County  
(405) 247-3205

Steve Stice  
Special Judge  
Cleveland County  
(405) 321-5638
Sheila Stinson  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-7109

Jacqueline Stout  
Special Judge  
Mayes County  
(918) 825-3404

Weldon Stout  
Special Judge  
Muskogee County  
(918) 684-1611

Khristan K. Strubhar  
Special Judge  
Canadian County  
(405) 395-6221

Katherine E. Thomas  
Special Judge  
Payne County  
(405) 372-4380

Geary L. Walke  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-7105

Allen J Welch  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-1442

David Wilkie  
Special Judge  
Kay County  
--

Cassandra M Williams  
Special Judge  
Oklahoma County  
(405) 713-6790

Richard A. Woolery  
Special Judge  
Creek County  
(918) 227-4080

Susan C. Worthington  
Special Judge  
Logan County  
(405) 282-6941

Susan Zwaan  
Special Judge  
Comanche County  
(580) 581-4585
2017 Oklahoma Judicial Conference Executive Board

Barbarah Swinton  
District Judge  
Past-President

Brad Benson  
Associate District Judge  
President - Elect

Thad Balkman  
District Judge  
President - Elect

Vice-Presidents

Jane Wiseman, Appellate Courts  
George Butner, District Judges  
Shawn Taylor, Associate District Judges  
Donna Dirickson, Special Judges

Secretary-Treasurer

Terry Bitting, Special Judge

OBA Delegates

Emmit Tayloe, District Judge  
Russ Vaclaw, Associate District Judge

Legislative Committee

Jim Croy, Special Judge

Education Committee

Noma Gurich, Justice  
Donna Dirickson, Special District Judge  
M. John Kane, IV, District Judge  
Jane P. Wiseman, Judge, Court of Civil Appeals  
Mary Fitzgerald, District Judge

Retired Judges

April Sellers White

Judges Helping Judges

Rick Bozarth, Associate District Judge  
Michael Flanagan, Associate District Judge

Bench Book Committee

James Bland, District Judge  
Norman L. Russell, Associate District Judge

Supreme Court Liaison

Chief Justice Douglas Combs

Administrative Director of the Court

Jari Askins, Administrative Director
New Judges

The new Judges’ Orientation is the foundation for the ongoing judicial education provided to the members of the Oklahoma Judicial Conference. The four-day course offers twenty-six credit hours of preparation for managing civil and criminal proceedings from both trial and appellate court perspectives. The new judges also learn about their administrative duties, docket management strategies, and how and where to seek guidance regarding judicial ethics. Keeping well-educated judges on the bench is the goal of Judicial Education.

Retired Supreme Court Justices

Justice Robert Lavender 1966-2007
Chief Justice 1979-1981
Justice Daniel Boudreau 1999-2004
Justice Steven Taylor 2004-2016
Chief Justice 2011-2013

Active Retired Judges

Active Retired Judges provide an invaluable service to the judicial system. After retirement, these Judges act on as needed basis to assist in alleviating conflicts and to ensure that dockets stay current. Active Retired Judges may conduct grand juries, trials or settlement conferences.

Honorable Glenn D. Adams
Honorable Dan G. Allen
Honorable Jerry Bass
Honorable Edward Cunningham
Honorable Joe Enos

Honorable Jimmy Filosa
Honorable Martha Kilgore
Honorable Tom Landrith
Honorable C. Allen McCall

Honorable Gene Prigmore
Honorable Dennis Sprouse
Honorable Joe C. Taylor
Honorable Donald Worthington
Workers’ Compensation Court of Existing Claims

This limited jurisdiction tribunal considers cases involving on-the-job injuries occurring while an employee is within the scope of employment. The Workers’ Compensation Court of Existing Claims resolves disputes relating to claims that arise before February 1, 2014. Appeals from the Workers’ Compensation Court of Existing Claims are to the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

Pictured left to right: Margaret A. Bomhoff, L. Brad Taylor (Presiding), Michael W. McGivens, Carla Snipes

Oklahoma Workers’ Compensation Commission

On May 6, 2013, Governor Mary Fallin signed SB1062, which created a new administrative Workers’ Compensation Court Commission. Claims that arise after February 1, 2014, are assigned to administrative law judges appointed pursuant to the new legislation.
Oklahoma has seventy-seven elected court clerks, one in each county. The Court Clerk is an officer of the court; the duties of the Court Clerk are ministerial in nature. The Court Clerk is statutorily responsible under 28 O.S. 2011 §151 for the collection of all fees, costs, and assessments that are properly owed to the District Courts of Oklahoma. The Court Clerks are the keepers and custodians of the records of the District Courts. They are currently at the forefront of the creation and implementation of the unified case management system for all Oklahoma Courts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Court Clerk</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adair</td>
<td>Nichole Cooper</td>
<td>918-696-7633</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfalfa</td>
<td>Tammi Miller</td>
<td>580-596-3523</td>
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<td>Atoka</td>
<td>April Maxey</td>
<td>580-889-3565</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beaver</td>
<td>Tammie Patzkowsky</td>
<td>580-625-3191</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beckham</td>
<td>Donna Howell</td>
<td>580-928-3330</td>
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<td>Blaine</td>
<td>Christy Matli</td>
<td>580-623-5970</td>
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<td>Bryan</td>
<td>Donna Alexander</td>
<td>580-924-1446</td>
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<td>Caddo</td>
<td>Patti Barger</td>
<td>405-247-3393</td>
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<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Marie Hirst</td>
<td>405-262-1070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>Renee Bryant</td>
<td>580-223-5253</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>Shelly Kissinger</td>
<td>918-456-0691</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choctaw</td>
<td>Laura Sumner</td>
<td>580-326-7554</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cimarron</td>
<td>Debbie Kincannon</td>
<td>580-544-2221</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>Marilyn Williams</td>
<td>405-321-6402</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>LaDonna Flowers</td>
<td>580-927-2281</td>
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<td>Comanche</td>
<td>Robert Morales</td>
<td>580-355-4017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>Janet Shively</td>
<td>580-875-3029</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>Deborah Mason</td>
<td>918-256-6451</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creek</td>
<td>Amanda Vanorsdol</td>
<td>918-227-2525</td>
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# Court Clerks Board and Officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Court Clerk</th>
<th>Telephone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latimer</td>
<td>Melinda Brinlee</td>
<td>918-465-2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>LeFlore</td>
<td>Melba Hall</td>
<td>918-647-3181</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>Cindy Kirby</td>
<td>405-258-1309</td>
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<td>Logan</td>
<td>Cheryl Smith</td>
<td>405-282-0123</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Kim Jackson</td>
<td>580-276-2235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Shauna Hoffman</td>
<td>580-227-4690</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>Wanda Pearce</td>
<td>580-795-3278</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayes</td>
<td>Rita Harrison</td>
<td>918-825-2185</td>
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<tr>
<td>McClain</td>
<td>Kristel Gray</td>
<td>405-527-3221</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCurtain</td>
<td>Vicki Justus</td>
<td>580-286-3693</td>
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<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
<td>Lisa Rodebush</td>
<td>918-689-2282</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Christie Pittman</td>
<td>580-622-3223</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muskogee</td>
<td>Paula Sexton</td>
<td>918-682-7873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble</td>
<td>Hillary Vorndran</td>
<td>580-336-5187</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nowata</td>
<td>April Frauenberger</td>
<td>918-273-0127</td>
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<tr>
<td>Okfuskee</td>
<td>Sherri Foreman</td>
<td>918-623-0525</td>
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<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Rick Warren</td>
<td>405-713-1705</td>
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<tr>
<td>Okmulgee</td>
<td>Charly Criner</td>
<td>918-756-3042</td>
</tr>
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<td>Osage</td>
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<td>Janet Dallas</td>
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<td>Cindy Ledford</td>
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<td>Karen Dunnigan</td>
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<td>Valerie Ueltzen</td>
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<td>Tina Freeman</td>
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<td>Roger Mills</td>
<td>Jan Bailey</td>
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<td>Kim Henry</td>
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<td>Vicki Beaty</td>
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<td>Dana Blevins</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
<td>M. Renee Ellis</td>
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<td>Tulsa</td>
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<td>Wagoner</td>
<td>Jim Hight</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
<td>Jill Spitzer</td>
<td>918-337-2870</td>
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<td>Carol Corbett</td>
<td>580-832-3836</td>
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<td>Staci Davey</td>
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<td>Woodward</td>
<td>Tammy Roberts</td>
<td>580-256-3413</td>
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ARTISTS AND THE OKLAHOMA JUDICIAL CENTER

The large majority of the artwork in the Judicial Center, about sixty-five percent, was already in storage at the Oklahoma Historical Society. The new artwork obtained for the Judicial Center was commissioned or purchased from a coterie of superb Oklahoma artists. Many of the artists donated their work, or provided it at a cost much less than their standard fees. The collection continues to grow. In 2017, we received two incredible paintings from Eric Tippeconnic and Poteet Victory.

Pictured (left to right): Derek [d.g. smalling] Smalling, Enoch Kelly Haney, Brent Greenwood, Debby Williams, Nathan Hart, Benjamin Harjo, Harvey Pratt, Jeri Redcorn, Justice Yvonne Kauger, Jim Van Deman, Betty Price, Brent Learned, Burt Seabourn, Jim Bruce, Patrick Riley, Jean Richardson, and Don Narcomey


After the collection was completed, Gayleen Rabakukk, MFA wrote a book entitled Art of The Oklahoma Judicial Center with photography by Neil Chapman, EdD. The book was edited by Justice Yvonne Kauger, Justice James Edmondson, Kyle Shifflett, JD, and Debby Williams MFA with a forward by Judge Robert Henry and an afterward by Bob Blackburn, PhD. Caddo potter Jeri Redcorn is featured on the cover.

Pictured at the official book signing held at the Oklahoma History Center from left to right: Mary Aiston, Gayleen Rabakukk, Neil Chapman, Kyle Shifflett, Brent Learned, Jean Richardson, Dan Horsechief and Terry Zinn