



Public Information Office
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

Office of the Circuit Executive · 95 7th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 · (415) 355-8800 · (415) 355-8901 Fax

NEWS RELEASE

October 5, 2015

Contact: David Madden, (415) 355-8800

Ninth Circuit Judge Edward Leavy to Receive Prestigious Devitt Award



*Senior Circuit Judge
Edward Leavy*

SAN FRANCISCO – The Honorable Edward Leavy, a distinguished senior circuit judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and one of Oregon’s most admired jurists, has been selected to receive the prestigious Edward J. Devitt Distinguished Service to Justice Award.

Considered to be the federal judiciary’s highest honor, the Devitt Award is presented by the Dwight D. Opperman Foundation. Recipients are chosen by a committee of federal judges, which this year was chaired by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Justice Thomas personally contacted Judge Leavy to inform him of his selection last week. Judge Leavy will formally receive the award during a special ceremony on November 13, 2015, at the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.

Often referenced as the Nobel Prize for the judiciary, the Devitt Award honors an Article III judge who has achieved a distinguished career and made significant contributions to the administration of justice, the advancement of the rule of law, and the improvement of society as a whole.

“When you think of those criteria, Judge Leavy immediately comes to mind. He has devoted his life to the law and is well deserving of this honor,” said Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas, who nominated Judge Leavy for the award in a letter also signed by five previous chief judges of the circuit.

Also contributing letters of support for the nomination were numerous other federal and state court judges, the current attorney general of Oregon and a former governor of the state, federal agency representatives, members of the bar, law professors and Native American tribal councils.

Judge Leavy, 86, who grew up in Oregon and has his chambers in the historic Pioneer Courthouse in Portland, has a long and distinguished record of public service. His judicial career spans 58 years and includes service on both the federal and state courts. In addition, he is renowned for his mediation skills, successfully settling a number of complex, high-profile civil and criminal cases.

The youngest of 10 children raised on a farm in rural Oregon, Judge Leavy graduated from the University of Portland in 1950, the first in his family to earn a college degree. He received his law degree from the University of Notre Dame, graduating fourth in his class in 1953. After a brief stint in private practice, he served as a deputy district attorney in Lane County, Oregon, from 1954 to 1957. From 1957 to 1976, he served as a district and circuit court judge in Lane County and was selected to serve as a justice pro tem of the Oregon Supreme Court in 1974.

In 1976, judges of the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon selected Judge Leavy to serve in the newly-created position of federal magistrate judge. President Reagan nominated him to serve his court as a district judge in 1984 then elevated him to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1987. Judge Leavy assumed senior status in 1997 but has hardly been retired. He was appointed to the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, serving from 2001 to 2008. He continues to carry a large caseload.

As a mediator, Judge Leavy has been sought after by judges nationwide to settle difficult and complex cases. His achievements in this area include overseeing the coordination, case management and settlements of hundreds of suits related to the 2000-2001 energy crisis in California and the Pacific Northwest. To date, more than \$8.5 billion in refunds to rate payers have been issued under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission refund proceedings.

Other noteworthy mediations include negotiating a plea agreement in a 1999 case involving Dr. Wen Ho Lee, a New Mexico scientist accused of mishandling the nation's nuclear secrets; settlements between 2004 and 2009 of suits by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon claiming trust mismanagement by the federal government; and settling multiple lawsuits and obtaining substantial compensation for pensioners following the collapse of Capital Consultants LLC of Oregon.

The Devitt Award is named for the late Edward J. Devitt, longtime chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. The award was established in 1982 and 36 jurists have received the honor to date. Previous winners from the Ninth Circuit include Chief Judge Emeritus

J. Clifford Wallace, honored in 2006; District Judge William W. Schwarzer of the Northern District of California, in 2004; and the late Chief Judge Emeritus James R. Browning, in 1990.

“I am overwhelmed by the kind and generous statements of those who nominated me and those who supported my nomination,” Judge Leavy said of the award. “It is a source of great pride to be identified with my Ninth Circuit colleagues who have previously received this award.”

#