



NEWS RELEASE

July 15, 2019

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Chief Justice Mary E. Fairhurst Receives Ninth Circuit Professionalism Award

SAN FRANCISCO – Chief Justice Mary E. Fairhurst of the Washington State Supreme Court has been named the 2019 recipient of the American Inns of Court’s prestigious Ninth Circuit Professionalism Award.

Chief Justice Fairhurst was honored for her dedication to access to justice issues and for her lifetime of public service. She was nominated for the honor by Jessica A. Skelton, a partner at Pacifica Law Group LLC and a former law clerk to Chief Justice Fairhurst.

In nominating Chief Justice Fairhurst, Ms. Skelton noted how Chief Justice Fairhurst “has worked tirelessly to educate citizens about the judiciary.” She added that the Chief Justice “is the type of person who is always looking for opportunities to make a difference, whether in the judiciary, the legal profession, or the community at large.”

Ninth Circuit Senior Judge Mary M. Schroeder presented the award to Chief Justice Fairhurst during a special ceremony held June 24, 2019, at the William Kenzo Nakamura United States Courthouse in Seattle, Washington.

Chief Justice Fairhurst was elected justice of the Washington State Supreme Court in 2002 and re-elected to a second term in 2008, serving in that capacity until January 2017, when she was elected chief justice of her court. Prior to joining the Washington State Supreme Court, she worked in the Office of the Attorney General in Olympia, Washington, where she held the positions of division chief of the Revenue, Bankruptcy and Collections Division, from 2001 to 2002; division chief of the Revenue Division from 2000 to 2001; assistant attorney general of the Criminal Justice Division from 1995 to 1999; assistant attorney general of the Transportation & Public Construction Division from 1991 to 1995; assistant to the attorney general in the Administrative Division from 1989 to 1991; and assistant attorney general in the Revenue Division from 1986 to 1989.

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Chief Justice Fairhurst received her juris doctor, magna cum laude, from Gonzaga University School of Law in 1984, and her bachelor of arts, cum laude, in political science from Gonzaga University in 1979. She has participated in many community activities, including serving as chair of the Washington State Civics Program since 2010 and working with the “We the People” program since 2005. She has been a member of the National Association of Women Judges since 2003, and has been a board member of the Thurston County Food Bank; the American Judicature Society, Washington Chapter; and the Girl Scouts, Pacific Peaks Council.

Her numerous accolades include the 2019 Justice CZ Smith Trailblazer Award, Latino/a Bar Association of Washington; 2018 Woman of the Year Award, Seattle University School of Law Women’s Law Caucus; First Place in public education category for production of “Myths and Misperceptions about the Washington Courts,” National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (government programming award); 2011 Distinguished Judicial Service Award, Gonzaga University Law School; and 2011 Judge William Nevins Award, Washington Judge’s Foundation.

The American Inns of Court professionalism award is given annually in each of the federal circuits to “a lawyer or judge whose life and practice display sterling character and unquestioned integrity, coupled with ongoing dedication to the highest standards of the legal profession and the rule of law.”

The U.S. Courts for the Ninth Circuit consists of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the federal trial and bankruptcy courts and related court units in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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