



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Judge M. Margaret McKeown Receives Washington Women Lawyers' President's Award

SAN FRANCISCO – Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit received the President's Award at the 50th anniversary celebration of [Washington Women Lawyers](#) (WWL) in Seattle on Oct. 16. The award was given in recognition of her role as one of the founders of the state-wide Washington Women Lawyers organization, her service as the first co-president and her continuing work on gender equality, both as a lawyer and on the federal court.

WWL is Washington's largest organization dedicated to furthering the full integration of women in the legal profession and promoting equal rights and opportunities for women. The president of WWL awards the annual President's Award to a recipient of her choosing. "While Judge McKeown's outstanding record of service and professionalism throughout her career on the bench and her accomplishments in private practice would each alone be worthy of recognition, I found it especially fitting to honor Judge McKeown this year in particular as WWL celebrated its 50th anniversary since its founding," said Jessica Kerr, president of the organization.

"Judge McKeown is a shining example of a woman who encountered glass ceilings during her career, and then proceeded to shatter them," said Kerr. "WWL honored a few of her significant accomplishments as the 'first' woman lawyer in many regards, from becoming the first woman partner at Perkins Coie to becoming the first woman member of its executive committee and management committee, to serving as the first woman president of the Federal Bar Association of the Western District of Washington. WWL also recognized Judge McKeown's important contributions to help foster healthy and harassment-free work environments, including her role chairing the first Workplace Environment Committee for the Ninth Circuit, and related work at the national level.

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“Most significant for purposes of WWL’s anniversary celebrations this year, Judge McKeown was honored for her role as one of the first statewide co-presidents of WWL after it was incorporated as a statewide organization. Judge McKeown helped transition WWL from the living room meetings of a handful of Seattle women attorneys to a statewide organization that thrives with over 500 members today. Her contributions to WWL include representing the organization as amicus before the Washington Supreme Court and representing WWL on a merit selection panel for federal judicial appointments, which helped ensure the appointment of qualified female judicial candidates long before she contemplated joining the bench herself.

“I was especially pleased to honor Judge McKeown for her contributions as one of WWL’s early leaders; a past president who laid a strong foundation for our current organization; and an accomplished judge who remains a continued advocate for promoting equal rights and opportunities for women in the workplace and beyond,” said Kerr.

In her acceptance remarks, Judge McKeown noted that looking back there is much to celebrate but that many of the challenges to equality for women lawyers remain, including pay equity, the glacial pace of equity partnerships, and childcare concerns. She also commented on the continuing role of women providing the “glue” in doing less glamorous work that helps make teams successful yet remains uncompensated.

Past recipients of the President’s Award include Judge Laura Inveen, Washington State Superior Court; Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst (Ret.), Washington State Supreme Court; Magistrate Judge Cynthia Imbrogno, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington; and Senior District Judge Rosanna Malouf Peterson, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington.

Judge McKeown is internationally recognized for her work on judicial ethics, gender issues, and international rule of law, and has gathered numerous accolades acknowledging her ardent pursuit of access to justice and her impact on the judiciary. Appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in 1998, she is the former president of the Federal Judges Association and

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former chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Federal Judicial Improvements. She also chaired the ethics committee for federal judges, the Judicial Conference of the U.S. Codes of Conduct Committee.

Among Judge McKeown's domestic activities in support of fair and equal treatment is her leadership role in addressing workplace harassment issues. She chairs the Ninth Circuit's Workplace Environment Committee and was appointed to the Federal Judiciary Workplace Conduct Working Group by Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., of the U.S. Supreme Court. She chaired the American Bar Association Nineteenth Amendment Commission and is on the managerial board of the International Association of Women Judges. As a lawyer, she was the first female partner at Perkins Coie, counsel in cases that ultimately resulted in women becoming members of Rotary and a member of the first federal Gender Bias Task Force.

Judge McKeown has assisted many countries with judicial reform. In 2016, she took part in the 10th annual International Humanitarian Law Dialogs in Nuremberg, Germany, where she presented the Nuremberg Declaration, a joint statement by international prosecutors.

The WWL President's Award follows many past honors for Judge McKeown, including the 2019 John Marshall Award, 2010 ABA Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, the White House Fellows Foundation's 2017 Legacy of Leadership Award, and the Girl Scouts' "Cool Women" Award.

Born in Casper, Wyoming, Judge McKeown earned her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Wyoming and her Juris Doctor from Georgetown University Law Center. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she engaged in private practice for more than two decades in Seattle and Washington, D.C. She resides in La Jolla, California.

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