



# Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

## News

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### **Brent D. Benjamin becomes Chief Justice**

For immediate release Wednesday, January 2, 2013

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Brent D. Benjamin became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia on January 1, 2013. He previously served as Chief Justice in 2009.

The position of Chief Justice is determined annually by a vote of the Court. Justice Benjamin succeeds Menis E. Ketchum, who served as Chief in 2012.

Chief Justice Benjamin was elected to a twelve-year term on the Supreme Court in November 2004. He is a native of Marietta, Ohio, and a graduate of The Ohio State University, from which he holds both a bachelor's degree and a law degree. After graduation from law school in 1984, he settled in Charleston, West Virginia.

Since his election, Chief Justice Benjamin has been a regular presenter and instructor on a variety of legal issues in various forums, including the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. As part of Constitution Day activities in 2009, he moderated a symposium on "Blogging and the First Amendment" at Marshall University.

During his tenure as Chief Justice in 2009, the Court accomplished several initiatives, including establishing an Access to Justice Commission, a Compliance Committee on Prisons and Jails, an acclaimed statewide Domestic Violence Registry, a statewide Mental Hygiene Registry, and a Northern Panhandle Re-Entry Court. In 2009, the Court also expanded pre-incarceration Treatment Courts, including Drug Courts, from a handful of counties to coverage of over half the state's population.

As Chief Justice, Justice Benjamin was active in Bar-related matters and on children's issues and drug issues. He led West Virginia's delegations to the 2009 Children's Summit and to the 2009 Drug Court Professionals Summit. He spoke at regional meetings of the West Virginia State Bar; he participated in regional Judicial Roundtables on Child Abuse and Neglect and in regional Summits on Domestic Violence and Firearms; and he worked to enhance and expand court outreach, judge-media relations, and public education about the role of the judicial branch.

Before his election, Chief Justice Benjamin was a principal attorney with Robinson and McElwee, PLLC, in Charleston. His twenty-year practice at that firm involved general civil litigation in state and federal courts, including toxic torts and complex litigation. His civil rights practice focused on protecting children from physical and sexual abuse. He has practiced in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth

Circuit, the United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia, the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, and before various courts in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Justice Benjamin is a 1999 graduate of Leadership West Virginia.

Away from his judicial duties, Justice Benjamin is also a current member of the Hocking College Archaeological Mission and the Amenmesse Project, and has participated in archaeological excavations in the United States and Egypt, including the recent re-excavation of Tomb TT-320 (the “Royal Cache Tomb”) and, currently, KV10 and KV63 (the first intact tomb to be discovered in the Valley of the Kings since the discovery of the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun).

Justice Benjamin attends Christ Church United Methodist, in Charleston. He is the father of Paul, Mary, Laura, Amanda, and Evan.