



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Former Circuit Judge Thomas W. Steptoe, Jr., Dies

For immediate release Monday, January 24, 2022

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Former Circuit Judge Thomas W. Steptoe, Jr., died Saturday, January 22. He was 70.

Judge Steptoe served in the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties) for 24 years, until his retirement in 2008. He was 33 years old when he was elected in 1984. At that time, he was the youngest person ever elected circuit judge. After his retirement, he served as a senior status circuit judge.

He was a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates from January 1981 through December 1984.

He was a graduate of Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Va. He received a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Virginia, where he graduated with distinction in 1974. He received a law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law in 1977. He also had a three-term certificate in Anglo-Saxon Language and Literature from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, which he attended from 1972 to 1973.

"I am truly saddened by the news of Tom's passing," said Chief Justice John Hutchison, who was a circuit judge in Raleigh County for 23 years. "I worked with him for years and considered him a friend. He will be missed by all who knew him. He will also be missed by those who depended upon his unflappable style and his well thought out decisions."

"Judge Steptoe was a highly respected member of the Eastern Panhandle Bar. After his long service as a circuit judge, he became an active senior status judge, accepting numerous appointments to sit in other circuits when a judge was recused from a case or if there was a temporary vacancy. He was a true public servant, and he will be missed," said Justice Tim Armstead.

"Judge Steptoe served the West Virginia judiciary honorably and with integrity for almost four decades. My sincere condolences to his wife, Sharon, and their children," said Justice Evan Jenkins.

“He was a fine man. He was very deliberate and thoughtful. He was an outstanding member of the Legislature when I knew him well,” said Justice William R. Wooton, also a former legislator. “The characteristics that made him an outstanding legislator served him well when he became a judge. It is a great loss to the state of West Virginia and especially to the Eastern Panhandle.”

“He was, in equal measures, laconic and perspicacious – sometimes simultaneously,” said Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit Judge David Hammer. “Judge Steptoe was a role model to me in what it meant to be a circuit judge; he was deliberate, careful, well versed in the issue of the moment, and yet, maintained an active sense of humor sometimes detected beneath his arched eyebrow. We will surely miss him.”

Judge Steptoe was named a West Virginia Bar Foundation Fellow in 2010. He was past president of the Charles Town Kiwanis Club; an active member of Zion Episcopal Church in Charles Town; a member of the Jamestown Society, the Clan Wallace Society, and the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society.

He is survived by his wife, Sharon, and two children, Anne, and Philip.

Brown Funeral Homes & Cremations-Jefferson Chapel is in charge of arrangements, which are incomplete. For more information, please visit the funeral home website: <https://www.brownfuneralhomeswv.com>.

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