

NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts



Contact: Aaron Nash
Phone: 602-452-3656
Email: anash@courts.az.gov

February 11, 2021

Presiding Disciplinary Judge William J. O'Neil Announces Retirement

PHOENIX – Arizona Supreme Court Presiding Disciplinary Judge William J. O'Neil informed Chief Justice Robert Brutinel that he will retire mid-year 2021 after his successor has been chosen. O'Neil was appointed in 2010 by the Arizona Supreme Court to serve as Arizona's first Presiding Disciplinary Judge. The disciplinary judge presides over attorney discipline, reinstatement, and disability cases.



Chief Justice Robert Brutinel commented, "In 2010, the Arizona Supreme Court selected Judge O'Neil to serve as the state's first Presiding Disciplinary Judge as part of an innovative approach to managing attorney regulation and discipline cases for the court. Judge O'Neil's experience as a trial judge and Pinal County presiding judge was critical to successfully establishing the office of Presiding Disciplinary Judge. Judge O'Neil set a standard for efficiency and fairness that creates a benchmark for the Presiding Disciplinary Judges to come. The court is grateful to Judge O'Neil for his service and his commitment to court improvement and wishes him the best in retirement."

Before his role as disciplinary judge, O'Neil served Arizona's courts for 20 years, including time as presiding judge of the Superior Court in Pinal County. His many court improvement efforts have come through service on multiple commissions, councils, committees, and state-wide forums.

As a judicial educator, O'Neil served as faculty in over 100 legal education seminars and conferences across the country and was twice a member of the Judicial College of Arizona. His role as keynote speaker in over 50 conferences and forums across the state and nation included the first national criminal sentencing conference in the United States. O'Neil's passion for education also included frequent service as a guest lecturer, adjunct professor, and as a judge for high school mock trials and the national *We the People* program. His contributions to furthering education and

understanding of the role of the law earned him the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services' *Mark Santana Law-Related Education Award* and his contributions were recognized with the *United States District Attorney's Cooperative Law Enforcement Award*. O'Neil's service as a judge was recognized with the State Bar of Arizona's *Justice Michael D. Ryan Award for Judicial Excellence* and his distinguished service awards include the *Arizona Supreme Court Improving Trust and Confidence in the Court Award*.

Judge O'Neil's career includes extensive efforts to improve family legal issues. He served on the Arizona Juvenile Justice Commission; the Children's Justice Task Force; the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Council; the Advisory Task Force for Improving Long-Term Outcomes for Incarcerated Women and Their Children; and the State, Tribal, and Federal Court Forum. He co-chaired the Supreme Court Committee to Study Family Court, helping initiate unique family court divisions in the Superior Court. As chair of the Committee on Juvenile Court, he successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to open juvenile hearings to the public and institute victim's rights. As chair of the Committee on Domestic Violence and the Court, and the Domestic Violence Rules Committee he successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to adopt the first extensive rules to govern orders of protection in the United States. As chair of Project Passport Judge O'Neil helped standardize protective orders across Arizona and the United States. He created one of the first Domestic Violence Court programs in the United States.

Outside the courts, O'Neil has been recognized for countless hours of community service, including serving on the boards of the Heart Foundation, the American Cancer Society, United Way, the Baptist Children's Board, Historical Societies, and Town Halls. O'Neil served multiple times as Emcee to Phoenix Ballet's *Under the Stars*, and announced the Casa Grande Light Parade for over twenty years. He has also coached numerous youth teams over the years.

Commenting on his departure, Judge O'Neil stated, "I am grateful for the many opportunities I have been given to serve the courts, the public, and this profession. I have been blessed to be able to safely moor myself to the steady rocks of my wife, family, friends, and colleagues. They all remain the proverbial wind beneath my wings. How wonderful it has been for this rural kid born and raised in Casa Grande, to have worked so closely with seven different Chief Justice over the last thirty years. Our Supreme Court is and has been in good hands."

The Arizona Supreme Court is accepting applications now for the position of Presiding Disciplinary Judge. The Chief Justice will make the appointment. For this position and others with the courts, see <http://azcourts.hrmdirect.com/employment/job-openings.php?search=true&>.