



SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

CHAMBERS OF
CHIEF JUSTICE ANNE M. BURKE

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When the Illinois Supreme Court convened in Springfield for the September Term, I informed my colleagues that I will be retiring from the court effective December 1, 2022. The decision to retire was not an easy one. However, after having been blessed to serve as a Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court for the past sixteen years, and as Chief Justice for the past three years, the race has been run and it is time to pass the gavel to a successor.

As a young girl, I never imagined that someday I would become a lawyer or serve on Illinois' highest court. My goals were much simpler. I loved athletics, art, working with children, and twirling a baton with the St. Rita High School Marching Band. Yet, ironically, it was the pursuit of these goals that led me to where I am today.

Looking back, it is clear to me that my love of sports and working with children has always been at the heart of who I am and whatever I may have achieved in my career and in my life, both professionally and personally.

As the youngest child of George and Helen McGlone, I grew up on Chicago's south side with two brothers and a sister who were older than I. Because of undiagnosed dyslexia, academics were a struggle in grammar school and high school. Perhaps for that reason, I gravitated towards athletics. In high school, I met Sister Henrietta, who became my teacher, friend and mentor. She encouraged me to pursue a career in physical education. As a result, in 1962, after graduation from Maria High School, I enrolled as a physical education major at George Williams College on a scholarship. As a condition of the scholarship, I worked part time at the Chicago Park District.

After only one year at George Williams, the College moved to Downers Grove in the western suburbs. I had no way to commute and as a result I was forced to become a college dropout. Putting my college career on hold, I began working full time for the Chicago Park District and volunteered to join a new program teaching sports to children with mental and physical disabilities. I loved working with these special children and I saw the positive impact that sports competition had on my students. It inspired me to propose a city-wide competition as a way for these special children and young adults to showcase their abilities and love of competition.

With my proposal in hand, I met with Eunice Kennedy Shriver to seek a financial grant from the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation. Ultimately, my idea came to life with the birth of the first Chicago Special Olympics in 1968, which has now grown to become the International Special Olympics serving special athletes in 192 countries across the globe. I have never forgotten what Mrs. Shriver said to me when we first met. She said my initial proposal was “unacceptable” because it did not go far enough and that I needed to “think bigger.” Her words have motivated me throughout my life.

Those words and my husband, Ed’s encouragement, inspired me to return to college at DePaul University, where I graduated with a degree in Education. I then enrolled at Chicago-Kent College of Law.

My legal career began somewhat late in life. I was 40 years old, with a husband and four children when I completed law school. After passing the bar, I began a small practice on the Southside of Chicago, often representing families and serving as a guardian ad litem for children.

My judicial career began in 1987, when Governor Jim Thompson appointed me as a judge of the Illinois Court of Claims – the first woman to serve in that position. Later, Governor Jim Edgar reappointed me. After that experience, I was afforded the opportunity to provide a voice for children and society’s most fragile citizens in 1994, when Governor Edgar named me Governor’s Special Counsel for Child Welfare Services and a member of his Legislative Committee on Juvenile Justice. In that role, I was able to contribute to the effort to reshape and improve our State’s juvenile justice system.

I became a justice of the Illinois Appellate Court, First District, in 1995, and in 2006, I was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court to fill the unexpired term of Justice Mary Ann McMorrow, the first woman to serve as a justice of the Illinois

Supreme Court and my friend and mentor. However, I have always believed that the nearly twelve years I spent as a justice of the Appellate Court and the sixteen years I have served on the Supreme Court, have been a continuation of my core desire to speak for those who have no voice of their own and to improve the lives of all of the citizens of the State. I will remain forever grateful to the people of Chicago and the First Judicial District for granting me the opportunity to serve them and all the people of Illinois.

I gratefully acknowledge that any achievements I may have made could not have been realized without the assistance and support of others. I thank, first and foremost, my family – my husband, Ed, who has been at my side through 54 years of marriage, and our children, Jennifer, Ed Jr., Emmett (deceased), Sarah, and Travis, and our nine grandchildren – for the sacrifices they have made for me and for being constant sources of love and encouragement.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the members of my staff – my team—who have worked with me during the 16 years that I have served on the Supreme Court. Heading the team is my amazingly skilled and talented assistant, Robin Karpinski, and my very knowledgeable and gifted senior clerk, Andy Smith. They, along with my other clerks Karen Jacobs, Anne Herbert and Anne Starr, and my marshal, Max Ortiz, have awarded me their friendship, assistance, and support and have been the best team I could ever have hoped for.

I have deep respect for the many jurists and legal professionals with whom I have been privileged to serve throughout my judicial career. I am thankful for the tremendous work they do to keep our legal system fair, equitable, and of the finest quality. I am grateful to my colleagues on the Supreme Court, both past and present, for the lessons they have taught me, not only about the law, but about life. The comradery and collegiality I have enjoyed with them makes it difficult to say goodbye, but I leave cherishing a lifetime of memories. I am grateful for the privilege of serving with them.

It must also be said that the past three years have presented a unique challenge for the administration of justice in Illinois. I wish to thank all members of the Judicial Branch for their hard work and efforts in overcoming the obstacles to create a stronger, more robust system of justice in the Land of Lincoln. My deepest thanks to all of you.

Finally, I especially thank the people of the great State of Illinois, for placing their trust in me and for allowing me to serve them.

Sincerely,

Anne M Burke

Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Illinois