

JUDICIAL HONORS

STEVEN LEIFMAN, 11th Judicial Circuit of Florida judge, received the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence at a dinner at the U.S. Supreme Court. The award is given by the National Center for State Courts to judges who exemplify judicial excellence, integrity, fairness, and professional ethics. Judge Leifman has helped to reform local and state



criminal justice systems' treatment of defendants with mental health issues.

The Dwight D. Opperman Foundation presented **EDWARD LEAVY**, senior judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, with the 2015 Edward J. Devitt Distinguished Service to Justice Award at a ceremony at the



U.S. Supreme Court Building. The Devitt Award is the federal judiciary's highest honor. A committee of federal judges chaired by Justice Clarence Thomas selected Judge Leavy for the award.

RUDOLPH A. SACCO, a retired Massachusetts probate and family court judge, received the Berkshire Medical Center's Francis X. Doyle Award. The Francis X. Doyle Award honors individuals who contribute to the health and well-being of the Berkshire area.

Maryland Court of Appeals Judge **SHIRLEY M. WATTS** was the keynote speaker at a luncheon celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Kappa Theta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Judge Watts was the first African-American woman appointed to serve on Maryland's highest court.

WILLIAM A. FEARS, a Georgia Circuit Superior Court judge, was honored by friends, family, and state officials with an award for his dedication and service to the

Accountability Hybrid Courts in Towaliga County. Judge Fears has led the courts for 15 years. Under Judge Fear's guidance, the courts have evolved to address substance abuse, veterans' needs, and mental health needs.

The National Asian Pacific Bar Association selected **SABRINA S. MCKENNA**,

Hawaii State Supreme Court, and **AMUL THAPAR**,

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky, as two of five members of the bar to receive its highest honor, the Daniel K. Inouye Trailblazer Award. The award recognizes the success, commitment, and leadership of lawyers who have paved the way for the advancement of other Asian Pacific American attorneys.

PHILLIP I. ADLER, a former Vigo County, Indiana judge, was named a Sagamore of the Wabach by Gov. Mike Pence. The award honors citizens who have contributed to Indiana's "Hoosier" heritage.



REBECCA PERSICK, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin Circuit Court judge, received the Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement Association Judicial Award at a banquet in Elkhart Lake. The award recognizes a judge, family court commissioner, or legislator who has improved the child support program.

BRUCE M. BALTER, a judge with the New York Supreme Court 2nd Judicial District, received the Turkish Cultural Center of Brooklyn's Enforcement Appreciation Award. The award recognized Judge Balter's service to New York and his championing of the Turkish Cultural Center's ideals.

FRANCES C. GULL, Allen County, Indiana Superior Court, was named the 2015 Munsterman Award winner by the National Center for State Courts. The award recognized Judge Gull's efforts to improve jury management in Allen County. Judge Gull helped to institute mjuror, software that allows jurors to perform jury-related tasks electronically. She also served on the Jury Management Committee of the Indiana Judicial Conference.



MILESTONES

These judges (active status) are celebrating milestone anniversaries this spring of their commission dates to the federal courts.

30 years

DANNY JULIAN BOGGS
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit
SIDNEY ALLEN FITZWATER
U.S. District Court, Northern District of Texas

25 years

MARILYN B. HUFF
*U.S. District Court,
Southern District of California*

45 YEARS AND COUNTING

A LEGEND KEEPS ON

The Honorable **GERALD BARD TJOFLAT** of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit celebrated an incredible 45 years on the federal bench in November. He was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida in 1970 by President Nixon, and now at age 86 is one of the longest-serving active federal judges in the country.



Tjoflat served in the U.S. Army from 1953 to 1955 as a counterintelligence agent before earning his degree from Duke Law School in 1957. Following law school, he worked in general private practice for about a decade in Jacksonville, Fla., and later served as a judge on the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida in Jacksonville from 1968 to 1970.

Tjoflat told the National Law Journal that his entry into the judiciary was rather "freakish." A Republican in a region dominated by Democrats – "You could count 'em on your fingers and toes, really" – a court appointment seemed a nonstarter. When he got the call from Jacksonville's first Republican governor since Reconstruction, he assumed he wouldn't survive past an election. "I had told my partners, 'I'll see you in January,'" he said. But no one registered to run against him. Not long after, he was nominated by Nixon to a new seat in the Middle District of Florida and confirmed by the Senate a week later.

Judge Tjoflat served five years on the district court before President Ford nominated him to the former Fifth Circuit in November 1975 at the age of 45. He was later reassigned to the then-newly created 11th Circuit in October 1981. He served as chief judge from 1989 to 1996. Twenty years later, he's still carrying a full caseload. When asked by the National Law Journal when he thought he might step back, he said simply: "We'll wait and see."