

THOMASENIA P. DUNCAN 1964–2024

# A Lasting Legacy

**THE JPML'S WORK IS NOT ONLY ACCOMPLISHED BY ITS JUDGES.** In fact, I would say the work we do at our bimonthly hearings is the tip of the iceberg. The Panel employs a top-notch staff that includes docket clerks, attorneys, a clerk, and the Panel Executive, who oversees all JPML business and ensures its mission.

Beginning in 2010, the role of the Panel Executive was filled by Thomasenia P. Duncan, whom we knew as Tommie, and who sadly passed away in April 2024. Tommie was well-known for her breadth of knowledge of complex litigation and her grace and wisdom in advising the members of the JPML. She skillfully led the Panel's staff, trusting their professionalism and ability to meet the high standards she set for them — and for herself. She also worked extensively with the bench and bar to advance education in the field of multidistrict litigation and played a pivotal role in the Panel's collaborative work with academia.

Tommie's academic career was as distinguished as her legal work. She graduated from Brown University with an AB in economics and international relations. Tommie then earned her JD from the University of Pennsylvania, where she was a member of the law review. She began her legal career at Covington & Burling LLP, where she handled employment cases and complex commercial litigation. She later served as Special Assistant to the Solicitor at the U.S. Department of Labor and as Senior Legal Adviser to the administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration. Immediately prior to her work at the JPML,

she served as General Counsel of the Federal Election Commission. She was an elected member of the American Law Institute and taught at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law and Georgetown University Law Center.

Tommie understood the importance of contributing to the next generation of civic-minded activists and invested her time and talents in a wide range of organizations. She served at the America's Promise Alliance — a partnership of groups devoted to improving the lives of children — as Senior Vice President, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary. She also served as General

Counsel for the Corporation for National and Community Service. In addition, Tommie was a founding mother of the Washington Area Women's Foundation, a community-supported foundation that invests in the power of women and girls of color in the Washington, D.C., region. She also served as President of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center Board and Vice Chair of the board of the Academy of Hope Adult Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. She was on the Edmund Burke School Board of Trustees and chaired its Equity and Inclusion Committee. Her love for young people also extended to membership in Jack and Jill of America Inc., a historic



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organization focused on providing social, cultural, and educational opportunities for youth.

When Tommie joined the JPML, she set about modernizing its procedures — including bringing us into the age of electronic case filing — and building an unparalleled professional staff. She was an innovator and a leader, but, more importantly, she was our friend and trusted adviser. Tommie's exemplary leadership, guidance, humor, and kindness are greatly missed by all past and current judges of the

JPML, her dedicated staff, and those throughout the legal profession who worked with her.

She is survived by her son, Hunter Harold, of whom she was prouder than any of her numerous professional accomplishments, as well as countless family and friends.

The business of the JPML of course must continue, but we have been heartbroken by her absence, and we will never forget her and her many contributions to the Panel's mission. It was a privilege and an honor serving as Chair during her tenure, and I am proud to have called her my friend.

— Karen Caldwell