



2018 Walks of Life Honoree

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor

Born in the nation's capital and raised in Strongsville and Parma, Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor has had a distinguished career in public service and the law that spans three decades and includes time as a private lawyer, magistrate, common pleas court judge, prosecutor, and Ohio Supreme Court justice.

O'Connor is the state's 10th chief justice and the first woman in Ohio history to lead the Ohio judicial branch. Since she took office in 2011, Chief Justice O'Connor has led significant reforms and improvements in the Ohio judicial system, including improving access to justice by addressing the impact that court fines, fees, and bail practices have on economically disadvantaged communities. In addition, she established a task force to maintain public trust and confidence in grand juries, created a committee to examine the administration of the death penalty, and proposed improvements to strengthen judicial elections in Ohio.

Her first statewide judicial election in 2002, in which she took more than 57 percent of the vote, made her the 148th justice to the court, the sixth woman to join the court, and gave the court its first-ever female majority. She was elected chief justice in 2010 and was re-elected to a second six-year term in 2016.

O'Connor earned her bachelor of arts degree at Seton Hill College in 1973 before going on to earn her law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 1980. After becoming a prosecuting attorney for Summit County in 1995, she was elected lieutenant governor in 1998. She became the governor's chief adviser on criminal justice issues, serving as director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, and as chair of Ohio's Security Task Force and the State Building Security Review Committee.

Among numerous awards and distinctions she received the Founders' Award from the Ohio Women's Bar Association in 2011 and was selected by the Irish Voice newspaper in New York to become a member of the Irish Legal 100 in 2010. O'Connor has two children and resides in Akron, Ohio.

2018 Walks of Life Award of the Irish American Archives Society, Cleveland OH.