



Press Release

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Alaska Supreme Court Justice Dana Fabe to Retire on June 1, 2016

Anchorage, Alaska, October 6, 2015. Justice Dana Fabe of the Alaska Supreme Court, whose term as Chief Justice ended on July 1, 2015, today announced her retirement from the court effective June 1, 2016. Fabe was appointed to the Supreme Court in January 1996 by Governor Tony Knowles and was the first woman appointed to serve on the Alaska Supreme Court and the first woman to serve as Alaska's Chief Justice. She served three terms as Chief Justice, from July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2003; from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2009; and from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2015. She is only the second Supreme Court justice in Alaska's history to serve three terms as Chief Justice; Justice Jay Rabinowitz served four.

Justice Fabe will have served over 20 years on the Alaska Supreme Court, making her the third longest-serving Supreme Court justice in Alaska's history, after Justice Rabinowitz and Justice Warren Matthews. Fabe was appointed to the superior court bench in Anchorage in 1988 by Governor Steve Cowper and served as the Deputy Presiding Judge of the Third Judicial District and a Training Judge.

Justice Fabe chairs the Alaska Supreme Court's Fairness, Diversity, and Equality Committee, and she co-chairs the court's Fairness and Access Commission and its Jury Procedures Improvement Committee. She created the annual statewide student poster contest illustrating the principles of Fairness, Diversity, and Equality. Fabe is also the Founder and Chair of Success Inside and Out, a prisoner reentry program at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center to help women nearing their release dates prepare for their transition back into the community. She also serves as Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Center for Judicial Ethics at the National Center for State Courts. Fabe is a Past President of the National Association of Women Judges, a Life Fellow of the American Bar Association, and a Sustaining Member of the American Law Institute. She previously served two terms as Second Vice President of the Conference of Chief Justices.

Throughout her tenure, Justice Fabe created a number of innovative and effective outreach programs for students to foster a better understanding of the legal system. Under her leadership, the Supreme Court expanded its Supreme Court LIVE program – which brings oral arguments in actual cases to high school students – to new areas of the state including Sitka, Barrow, and

Ketchikan. Fabe has chaired the Color of Justice program, which introduces diverse students to the law, and she created MentorJet, a mentoring program that provides a speed-mentoring experience to high school and college students who may be interested in legal careers. Fabe's MentorJet project has been adopted by the National Association of Women Judges as one of its signature programs, and it has been replicated in many states, including California, Michigan, and Kentucky.

Throughout all three of her terms as Chief Justice, Justice Fabe has focused on outreach to tribal courts, designing and implementing joint training programs where state court judges and tribal court judges have had an opportunity to learn together from national presenters and from each other. Fabe has also championed principles of procedural fairness in the court, providing training to judges and court staff on the topic and creating a "Pledge of Fairness" poster that has been translated into six languages and is displayed in every courthouse in the state. Her "Pledge of Fairness" initiative has received national recognition as the first of its kind in the country.

Justice Fabe notes that she is giving early notice of her retirement because the process for filling a judicial vacancy is an extensive one that can take up to seven to eight months, and she wishes to ensure a smooth transition. Alaska's Constitution adopted a system for selecting judges based on merit, which requires a comprehensive evaluation of judicial candidates by the Alaska Judicial Council. The evaluation includes detailed applications, with references and writing samples, in-depth investigation of applicants, polling of all lawyers and judges in the state, public hearings, interviews, nominations to the governor, and appointments by the governor.

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