

William T. Lawrence



Introduction

William Thomas Lawrence (born 1947) is a United States district judge for the [Southern District of Indiana](#). He was the first magistrate judge from the Southern District to be elevated to district judge status.^[5]

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Personal life

Judge Lawrence was born and raised in Mooresville, Indiana. He graduated from Mooresville High School in 1965.^[3] His wife is Jeanie M. Lawrence.^[1]

College and law school

Judge Lawrence began his collegiate career at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge where he joined Lambda Chi Alpha, a national college social fraternity. After his sophomore year, Judge Lawrence transferred to Indiana University in Bloomington where he graduated in 1970 with a Bachelors of Science in Business. ^[1]

In 1973, Judge Lawrence earned his doctorate in jurisprudence from the Indiana University School of Law – Indianapolis. Throughout his career, Judge Lawrence has supported his alma mater by giving remarks to students. ^[1]

Judge Lawrence was admitted to the bars of Indiana and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana in 1973. The following year, he gained admittance to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and the U.S. Tax Court. In 1975, Judge Lawrence was admitted to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana. ^[1]

Law practice

Private practice

Upon graduation from law school in 1973, Judge Lawrence began practice at the firm Poore, Popcheff, Wurster, Sullivan & Burke. Three years later, he moved to Popcheff, Lawrence & Page. In 1979, Judge Lawrence started his own firm under the name Lawrence, Carter, Gresk, Leerkamp & Walsh. While working as the Marion County Circuit Court Master Commissioner, he practiced part-time as “of counsel” with Johnson, Smith, Pence, Densborn, Wright & Heath from 1989 to 1997. ^[1]

While in the private sector, Judge Lawrence practiced in both civil and criminal litigation, predominantly in state court. He represented both plaintiffs and defendants and also worked in family law. During his career as an attorney, Judge Lawrence tried, as sole counsel, close to one hundred cases to verdict or judgment. ^[1]

Major Felony Public Defender

Judge Lawrence began work as a part-time public defender for the Marion County Superior Court, Criminal Division 4, in 1974. For nine years, he regularly represented indigents charged with major felonies for nominal compensation. Judge Lawrence did all of his own pre-trial preparation and witness interviews. His work included plea bargaining, jury and court trials, and, occasionally, appeals. Judge Lawrence continued working in this position until his election as Master Commissioner of the Marion County Circuit Court in 1983. ^[1]

Notable cases

United States v. Yearwood (N.D. Ind. 1975)

Just two years out of law school, Judge Lawrence acted as sole counsel for his client, who was charged with extortion, in a federal jury trial. The charges alleged that the defendant and an accomplice had planned and executed a plot to extort money from a Lake County, Indiana, bank

by threatening to harm the bank's president. Despite numerous witnesses, including FBI agents, Judge Lawrence was able to obtain an acquittal for his client. ^[1]

Richardson v. Clark, 444 N.E.2d 868 (Ind. App. 1983)

Richardson v. Clark established that the jurisdictional limit on the amount of damages that applies in small claims court no longer applies once the case is transferred to Municipal Court at the defendant's request. Acting as sole counsel, Judge Lawrence represented the plaintiffs, Mr. and Mrs. Richardson. This case, which involved damage to the Richardsons' automobile, was originally filed in small claims court and automatically transferred to the Marion County Municipal Court when the defendant requested a jury trial. ^[1]

State of Indiana v. Heywood, 470 N.E.2d 63 (Ind. 1984)

As sole counsel, Judge Lawrence represented his client before the Marion County Superior Court. This case presented the issue of whether the insanity standard should be applied to the defense of voluntary intoxication. Charged with Class A felony robbery, Class B felony confinement, and Class A misdemeanor carrying a firearm without a license, the defendant was convicted. ^[1]

Fultz v. Newkirk, 475 N.E.2d 706 (Ind. App. 1985)

In this case, the appellant mayoral candidate represented by Judge Lawrence contested the Washington Circuit Court's ruling which overturned his narrow 1983 victory to become the next mayor of Salem, Indiana. Prior to *Fultz v. Newkirk*, two lines of cases had been developing in Indiana regarding the validity of absentee ballots. ^[1] In *Fultz*, the Indiana Court of Appeals affirmed the trial court, finding that absentee ballots not initialed by poll clerks were not to be counted for reasons of distinguishing official ballots from fraudulent ones. The Court used *Schoffstall v. Kaperak* (Ind. 1982) to support their reasoning, "We found there that the poll clerks' initials were important not only to show that only valid ballots go into the ballot box but . . . also . . . so that the valid ballots could be identified when taken from the ballot box. The importance of having the poll clerks' initials on the ballots[] insures the integrity of the voting system." ^[8]

United States v. Marvin Kinsler, Cause No. IP 93-20-CR-02 (S.D. Ind.1993)

In *United States v. Marvin Kinsler*, a drug conspiracy case, Judge Lawrence was retained as private counsel for the defendant. It was alleged that the defendant had purchased for resale fifty to sixty pounds of marijuana twice per month for several years from a known wholesaler. After lengthy negotiations, the defendant pleaded guilty to one count of the four-count indictment. He was sentenced to sixty months incarceration, the minimum allowed per sentencing guidelines. ^[1]

Marion County Circuit Court

Master Commissioner

In August 1983, Judge Lawrence was selected by Presiding Judge John M. Ryan to be his Master Commissioner at the Marion County Circuit Court, a civil court. Though technically a part-time position, due to the health of Judge Ryan, Judge Lawrence took over the more day-to-day responsibilities and, for the last five to seven years of his tenure as Master Commissioner, had

essentially the same responsibilities as a judge. In fact, Judge Ryan routinely designated Lawrence judge pro tempore. As such, Judge Lawrence decided cases to verdict and took on a greater administrative role. ^[1]

Presiding Judge

In November 1996, Judge Lawrence was elected in a partisan countywide general election as Presiding Judge of the Marion County Circuit Court. From January 1997 to November 2002, he handled all civil matters, including exercising exclusive statewide jurisdiction for insurance reorganizations/liquidations and medical liens. The court also supervised the nine Marion County Small Claims Courts and had exclusive jurisdiction in Marion County for all county tax collections, name changes, and hardship driver's licenses. ^[1]

When Judge Lawrence became presiding judge, the Marion County Circuit Court had one of the largest caseloads in the state as determined by the Indiana Supreme Court's weight caseload study. Though this same study determined that the Court could not adequately serve the pending caseload without the addition of three judicial officers, Judge Lawrence lowered the number of cases pending in his court from 8,400 to 6,850, a reduction of almost twenty percent, without any additional staff and within budget. Judge Lawrence took pride in his efficiency, returning approximately eight percent of his budget allocation each year to the county general fund. ^[1]

In 2000, Judge Lawrence initiated and led the creation of the Marion County Paternity Court, one of the first courts in the nation singularly dedicated to establishing paternity and ensuring the collection of child support for welfare recipients. By 2004, the Paternity Court had accounted for approximately eighty million dollars in child support collections, benefiting some 59,900 single heads of households and 8,300 welfare families. ^[1] During his confirmation hearing with the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee on May 1, 2008, Judge Lawrence expressed his satisfaction with the program, "In the beginning, we believed maybe we could collect \$30 million," he said. "I'm happy to report that in 2004, that court was directly responsible for putting \$80 million into pockets of single, head-of-household, custodial parents of children born out of wedlock, and I'm proud of that." ^[6] The Marion County Paternity Court continues to serve disadvantaged families in Marion County today.

Upon leaving the state bench in November 2002, Judge Lawrence was honored with certificates of merit and tribute plaques from several Marion County agencies. ^[1]

Federal Magistrate Judge

Nomination

Appointed as magistrate judge by the five sitting judges of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, Judge Lawrence began his term in November 2002. ^[3]

Judgeship

As a magistrate judge, Judge Lawrence managed pre-trial proceedings on all non-dispositive motions filed in civil cases. On occasion, he conducted preliminary criminal proceedings. In addition, Judge Lawrence had the responsibility, including trial, for cases referred by the district judge. He also made it a point to support new U.S. citizens by presiding over three to four naturalization ceremonies per year. ^[1]

In what he considers as one of the most significant aspects of his work as a magistrate judge, Judge Lawrence usually conducted between six to eight settlement conferences per week. Believing that settlements “contribute greatly to the efficient administration of the court,” he made it his practice “to encourage the parties to be mindful of the possibility of settlement” at all times, beginning at the initial pretrial conference and continuing through the litigation process. Judge Lawrence also made telephone calls to counsel when the case seemed particularly “amenable to settlement.” ^[1]

Federal District Judge

Nomination

In May and November 2007, Judge Lawrence interviewed with U.S. Senator Richard G. Lugar regarding his interest in the vacancy arising on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana from Judge [John Daniel Tinder](#)'s elevation to the [Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals](#). Between those months, he also met with officials and attorneys from the Office of White House Counsel and the Department of Justice. ^[1] With the recommendation of Senator Lugar and Senator Evan Bayh, President [George W. Bush](#) nominated Judge Lawrence to the United States Senate on February 14, 2008. The American Bar Association, by a substantial majority, rated Judge Lawrence as “Well Qualified.” ^[6]

Judge Lawrence underwent a hearing before the [United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary](#) on May 1, 2008, which voted to forward his nomination. He was introduced by Senator Lugar. “This selection was the product of a bipartisan process and reflective of the importance of finding highly qualified federal judges to carry forward the tradition of fair, principled, and collegial leadership,” said Lugar. “I have known Bill for many years, and I have always been impressed with his high energy, resolute integrity, and remarkable dedication to public service.... Throughout Bill’s career, his reputation for personal courtesy, fairness, decency and integrity was equally well-earned and widespread among colleagues and opposing counsel alike and on both sides of the political aisle.” ^[6]

Judge Lawrence was unanimously confirmed 97-0 by the [United States Senate](#) on June 26, 2008 and received his commission four days later. ^[4]

Other activities and associations

Bar associations

An active member and leader of many legal groups, Judge Lawrence has been part of the Indianapolis Bar Association (IBA) since 1973. He currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Litigation Section and previously served in that position from 2004 to 2005. ^[3] Judge Lawrence has also led the IBA as a Vice President (2005), Chairman of the Judicial Section of the Association (2004), and Co-Chairman of the 2002 Bench Bar Conference in Bloomington, Indiana. He was also appointed Chairman of the IBA's Continuing Legal Education Commission in June 1997 and re-appointed in 1999 and 2001. ^[1]

A member of the Indiana Judicial Conference, Judge Lawrence was elected to its Board of Directors in 1997, 1997, and 2001. ^[3] He has also served on the Board of Managers for the Indiana Judges Association from 2000 to 2002. ^[1] For both judicial organizations, Judge Lawrence was a member of the Court Management Committee. After his elevation to the federal court in 2002, Judge Lawrence took part in the United States Magistrate Judge's Association. ^[3]

Judge Lawrence has been a master of the Sagamore American Inn of Court since its inception in Indianapolis in 1997. He gives a presentation each year in conjunction with his group. Judge Lawrence is also an original and continuing member of the Executive Committee of the Marion County Civil Rules Committee. ^[3] Other associations for Judge Lawrence include the Indianapolis Lawyer's Club, Seventh Circuit Bar Association, Federal Bar Association, and the American Trial Lawyers Association. ^[1, 3]

Volunteer

Prior to his election to the bench, Judge Lawrence was active in the Indianapolis Bar Association's pro bono panel, devoting approximately thirty hours per year. In early 1970s, he was part of the Indianapolis Bar Association's Pro Bono Task Force, which established a mechanism for indigents to secure representation in civil actions.

Today, precluded from practicing law as a judicial officer, Judge Lawrence has reached out to those in need over the radio. He has several times been a guest on WTLC, an Indianapolis radio station that is primarily targeted to an African-American audience, discussing topics such as minority representation on jury panels and the impact minorities could potentially have on the selection of state court judges. Judge Lawrence has also been a guest on WSYW, an Indianapolis radio station targeted to a Hispanic audience and hosted by Dr. Esperanza Zendejas, the former superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools. One topic discussed on the show addressed the impact of criminal convictions on naturalization statutes. On both shows, mindful of his listening audience, Judge Lawrence takes time to answer their questions. ^[1]

Teacher

Judge Lawrence actively participates in education seminars for lawyers and judges. After being appointed as Chairman of the IBA's Continuing Legal Education Commission three times between 1997 and 2001, Judge Lawrence co-authored an instruction manual, entitled *Handbook*

2000. ^[1,3] This handbook was the IBA's first instruction manual to give policies and procedures for the preparation of continuing legal education seminars. ^[3] Judge Lawrence has also presented for the IBA's Bar Leaders Series.

A graduate of the Indiana University School of Law – Indianapolis, Judge Lawrence has given back to his alma mater by speaking to its current students.

Awards and honors

Upon leaving the state bench in November 2002, Judge Lawrence was honored with certificates of merit and tribute plaques from several County agencies. ^[1] In November 1997, he was nominated a “Fellow of the Foundation” by the Indianapolis Bar Association. ^[3]

From 1996 to 2002, Judge Lawrence served on the board of directors for the Marion County Justice Agency. As a board member, Judge Lawrence coordinated the policies of the agencies that comprised the criminal justice system in Marion County. He also had responsibility of reviewing grant applications and recommending recipients for the \$750,000 in grants awarded annually by Drug-Free Marion County. ^[1]

From 1988 to 1989, Judge Lawrence acted as a member of the three-member and bipartisan Indiana State Recount Commission. Appointed by Governor Robert Orr to the Indiana State Forensic Science Commission, Judge Lawrence proposed legislation to upgrade the Indiana county coroner system from 1984 to 1990. From 1983 to 1989, he also served on the Indianapolis Fire Department Civilian Merit Board, upgrading its standards and developing an application process for firefighters that conformed to federal guidelines. His final year on the Merit Board, Judge Lawrence was elected president. ^[1]

In 1980, Judge Lawrence was appointed as Executive Director of Indiana's first Merit Selection Commission on Federal Judicial Appointments by U.S. Senator Richard G. Lugar. Governor Otis Bowen was the commission chairman. ^[3] For six years, Judge Lawrence developed an application and selection process for the nomination of Federal District Court Judges, United States Attorneys, and United States Federal Marshals for the Northern and Southern Districts of Indiana. Judge Lawrence then implemented the process, including coordinating the screening of applicants and organizing meetings of the Commission. ^[1] Beginning in 2007, Judge Lawrence went through the process that he had developed on his way to becoming a Federal District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana.

“See also” for Wikipedia

See also

- [United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana](#)

External links

- [Biography of Judge William T. Lawrence](#)

- [William T. Lawrence](#) at the *Biographical Directory of Federal Judges*, a [public domain](#) publication of the [Federal Judicial Center](#).
- [William Lawrence on Judgepedia](#)
- [List of Southern District of Indiana judges](#)

References

¹ US Senate Committee on the Judiciary: Questionnaire for Judicial Nominees, 2008.

² [Judges and Courtrooms: Judge William T. Lawrence](#), June 16, 2010

³ Memorandum from the Chambers of William T. Lawrence. "Judge Lawrence's Biography." Received August 18, 2010.

⁴ *Federal Judicial Center*. [Lawrence, William T.](#) U.S. District Courts for the Districts of Indiana. Federal Judicial Center.

⁵ *The Indiana Lawyer*. [BREAKING: Lawrence confirmed](#).

⁶ *The Indiana Lawyer*. [Federal magistrate faces Senate committee](#).

⁷ *Lugar Press Release*. [Lugar Statement Introducing Judge William Lawrence](#), May 1, 2008.

⁸ *Fultz v. Newkirk*, 475 N.E.2d 706 (Ind. App. 1985)

Legal offices	
Preceded by Judge John Daniel Tinder	United States District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana 2008-present
Succeeded by: Debra McVicker Lynch	United States Magistrate Judge for the Southern District of Indiana 2002-2008
	Judge of the Marion County Circuit Court 1997-2002
	Master Commissioner of the Marion County Circuit Court 1983-1997

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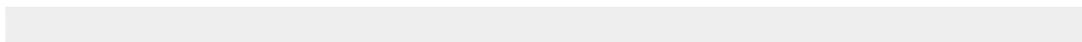
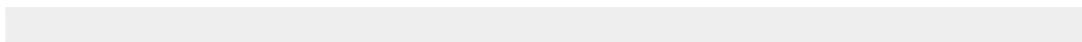
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