



PROFILE: GOVERNORS' AWARD RECIPIENT

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DWIGHT E. TARWATER - 2020 RECIPIENT, KNOXVILLE BAR ASSOCIATION GOVERNOR'S AWARD

The Knoxville Bar Association, through its elected Board of Governors, recognizes lawyers who bring special pride to the association through its highest award, the Governors' Award. That award recognizes those attorneys considered by the association to be role models. Service as an attorney and community service are considered in determining the recipient. In 2020, the Governor's Award recipient is Dwight E. Tarwater.

What an interesting and spectacular career Dwight is having. He served as law clerk to Court of Appeals' Judge Houston Goddard after graduating from the University of Tennessee Law School in 1980. In 1987, he and Don Paine founded the firm of Paine, Tarwater and Bickers (yes, that Don Paine, a mentor to all Tennessee attorneys). Dwight's practice has primarily been that of major and complex litigation. He was retained as national counsel by a company who had manufactured asbestos-containing products and has represented other Fortune 500 companies in product liability, pharmaceutical and commercial cases. While some of us as Knoxville attorneys might be able to count several counties in the state in which we have tried cases, Dwight has tried cases in 20 states . . . as lead counsel! He has handled cases in states from California to Pennsylvania. On appeal, he has represented clients in the United States Courts of Appeal in the Fourth, Sixth, Tenth, and Eleventh Circuits. Further, he has represented clients before the Tennessee Court of Appeals and Tennessee Supreme Court.

Since 2002, he has been listed in Best Lawyers in America and was selected five times as Lawyer of the Year for the Knoxville area.

In 2006, he was invited and became a Fellow in the American College of Trial Attorneys.

It's the smile! Dwight always smiles. He turns on the smile, and those with or near him light up . . . especially jurors.

He has served the Knoxville Bar Association as President of the Barristers, President of the Knoxville Bar Association, and as East Tennessee Governor of the Tennessee Bar Association. He has served the bar associations in many other capacities and has been an invited

guest lecturer at the University of Tennessee College of Law and asked to speak at various meetings of professional colleagues.



Dwight is compassionate and caring. For many years, he served as a Sunday School teacher for young people at his church. He and his firm have devoted a great number of hours to pro bono representation of indigent persons and Dwight served on the Board of Directors for the Knoxville Legal Aid Society, Volunteer Legal Assistance Program, and Pro Bono Project. His firm has been honored with the Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year Award repeatedly.

Dwight has served not only the East Tennessee community, but the entire state. In 2014, he was asked by Governor Bill Haslam to come to Nashville as General Counsel to the Governor. He answered that call and served through the Governor's term, returning to his firm in 2019. His position in the Governor's office called for his talents as to legal, financial, political and governmental issues. He served as a member of the Governor's Cabinet. He

oversaw a team that reviewed pending legislation and other policies and coordinated the Governor's judicial appointment process. He served as Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer for the Executive Branch and as the National Criminal Justice Policy Advisor to the National Governors' Association for Tennessee. He steered numerous reforms in criminal justice, juvenile justice, law enforcement, and drug treatment.

Dwight is really proud of his family and surely he should be. His son, Davis, earned an Olympic Gold Medal in swimming (2012) and is now a businessman in Knoxville. Davis' wife, Brittany, is a TV news anchor. Daughter, Katherine, a former school teacher, is married to Dr. Brian Freeman and they have three children. His younger son, Dwight, recently married to Charity, is a health care consultant in Knoxville. The younger Dwight graduated from Cornell and the University of California Berkeley, where he was a Division One basketball player. There are a total of four grandchildren.

And so Dwight has had, and is having, an interesting, productive, and admirable life and career. He's a role model attorney and he's a role model person. Congratulations Dwight!