

History of New Jersey Supreme Court

The Supreme Court held its first session under the 1947 constitution on Sept. 15, 1948. Under the previous constitution, ratified in 1844, the Court of Errors and Appeals was the highest court in the state. The name of the court was derived from its function of hearing appeals and correcting previous courts' errors in judgment. The justices of that court also presided over the lower courts. Each court had its own rules and procedures, and the jurisdictions were ambiguous and often overlapped. Litigants often were required to have their disputes resolved in more than one court.

As New Jersey's population grew and its primarily agrarian society became more industrialized, the legal system no longer met the needs of the citizens and businesses it served. The realization of the new constitution was the culmination of a 17-year battle that pitted the state and county bar associations, the majority of sitting judges and powerful Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague against Arthur T. Vanderbilt, the first chief justice under the 1947 constitution, and others who brought about the constitutional convention and the new document.

The 1947 constitution consolidated 17 courts into five, abolished overlapping and conflicting jurisdictions and revised an awkward appeals process. Judges were granted tenure after an initial term, and a retirement age of 70 was established. The 1947 constitution also gave the chief justice sole authority over the administration of the state's courts and the Supreme Court oversight over the admission to the practice of law and attorney discipline. It laid out the appellate process, the prerequisites for becoming a judge and the position of administrative director of the courts.

Former Chief Justices

Eight chief justices have served under the 1947 constitution. First located in the Statehouse Annex, the Supreme Court moved to the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton in 1981.

- James R. Zazzali** (10/26/06-6/17/07)
- Deborah T. Poritz** (7/10/96-10/25/06)
- Robert N. Wilentz** (8/10/79-6/30/96)
- Richard J. Hughes** (12/18/73-8/09/79)
- Pierre P. Garven** (9/1/73-10/19/73)
- Joseph Weintraub** (8/20/57-8/31/73)
- Arthur T. Vanderbilt** (9/15/48-6/16/57)

Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex

The Justice Complex is named for Richard J. Hughes (1909-1992), the only person in the history of New Jersey to serve as both governor (1962-1970) and chief justice (1973-1980).

Completed in 1982, the complex houses the New Jersey Supreme Court, the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Office of the Public Defender in the north wing, and the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety in the west wing.

The building is arranged in a V-shape, connected to a cube-shaped "jewel" via bridges on the fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth floors. The jewel is occupied by the fourth floor conference center, the fifth floor Appellate Division courtroom, the seventh floor Tax Court courtroom and the Supreme Court courtroom on the eighth floor.

The 10,800-square-foot Supreme Court courtroom features a 21-foot tall ceiling, sloping to 18 feet in the center, a 22.5-foot high skylight, polished walls fashioned from Vermont marble and etched glass created by glass artist Benoit Gilsoul. The bench, counsel's tables and podium were crafted from African mahogany veneer. The artwork in the Justice Complex includes three abstract works by Beverly Pepper and life-like sculptures created by J. Seward Johnson.

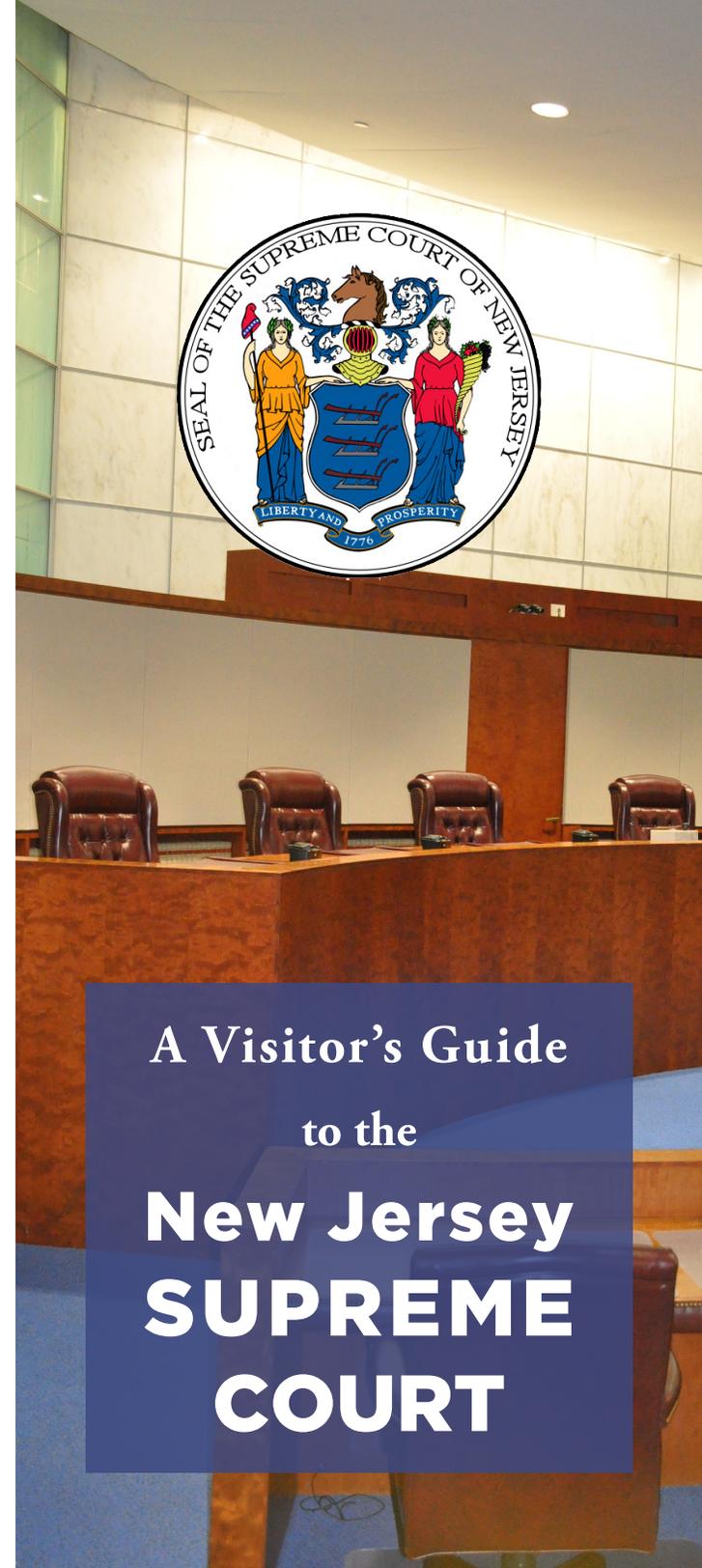
For more information about the New Jersey Supreme Court, including a link to watch live and archived oral arguments, go to www.njcourts.gov.



STUART RABNER
CHIEF JUSTICE

GLENN A. GRANT, J.A.D.
ACTING ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COURTS

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A Visitor's Guide
to the
**New Jersey
SUPREME
COURT**

Chief Justice



Stuart Rabner

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner is the eighth chief justice to lead the New Jersey Supreme Court since the 1947 state constitution. Born on June 30, 1960, Chief Justice Rabner was raised in Passaic. He graduated summa cum laude from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University in 1982. He graduated cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1985. He was named New Jersey attorney general in September

2006 and served in that position until his nomination to the Court. Chief Justice Rabner is a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Judicial Administration at New York University School of Law, and a member of the Council of the American Law Institute. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Conference of Chief Justices from 2010 to 2012.

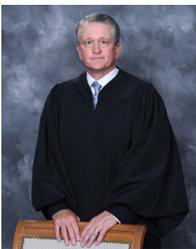
Associate Justices



Anne M. Patterson

Associate Justice Anne M. Patterson was born in Trenton, New Jersey in 1959. She graduated from Dartmouth College with a degree in Government in 1980, and received her J.D. from Cornell Law School in 1983. Justice Patterson then joined the Morristown, New Jersey law firm of Riker, Danzig, Scherer, Hyland & Perretti as an associate. In 1989, Justice Patterson left Riker Danzig to serve as a deputy attorney general and special assistant to New Jersey Attorney General Peter N. Perretti

Jr. Justice Patterson served as Chair of the New Jersey State Bar Association Product Liability and Toxic Tort Section, as an officer and trustee of the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey, and as a trustee of the Trial Attorneys of New Jersey.



John Jay Hoffman

Justice John Jay Hoffman was nominated as an associate justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court by Gov. Phil Murphy and was sworn in on Oct. 2, 2024. Born in New Brunswick in 1965, Justice Hoffman was raised in Middlesex County. He graduated from Colgate University and Duke University School of Law and served as a law clerk to Judge Al Engel of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

At the time of his appointment, Justice

Hoffman was general counsel and senior vice president at Rutgers University. He served as acting attorney general of New Jersey from June 2013 to March 2016. He began his legal career as an associate at Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, L.L.P. in Washington, D.C. He joined the U.S. Department of Justice in 1996 as a trial attorney in the civil division before moving to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Trenton in 2005. Justice Hoffman then served as director of investigations at the New Jersey Comptroller's Office, starting in 2010.



Fabiana Pierre-Louis

Associate Justice Fabiana Pierre-Louis was nominated by Gov. Phil Murphy on June 5, 2020 and was sworn in as an associate justice on Sept. 1, 2020. She is the first Black woman to serve on the New Jersey Supreme Court. At the time of her appointment, Justice Pierre-Louis was a partner at Montgomery McCracken, where she worked in the white collar and government investigations practice group. She focused her practice on complex commercial litigation, white collar crime, and government investigations. She received a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and a law degree from Rutgers Law School. Justice Pierre-Louis began her legal career as a law clerk to New Jersey Supreme Court Associate Justice John E. Wallace Jr., whose seat she now occupies.



Rachel Wainer Apter

Associate Justice Rachel Wainer Apter was nominated by Gov. Phil Murphy and was sworn in as an associate justice on Oct. 21, 2022. Born on July 22, 1980, Justice Wainer Apter grew up in Rockaway. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and received her law degree from Harvard Law School. After law school, she served as a law clerk for U.S. District Judge Jed Rakoff, U.S. Circuit Judge Robert Katzmann, and U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. At the time of her appointment, Justice Wainer Apter was serving as director of the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights. She previously served as counsel to the New Jersey Attorney General and assistant attorney general.



Douglas M. Fasciale

Associate Justice Douglas M. Fasciale was nominated by Gov. Phil Murphy and was sworn in as an associate justice on Oct. 21, 2022. Justice Fasciale was born on Nov. 5, 1960 and was raised in East Brunswick. Justice Fasciale received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Seton Hall University in 1982. In 1986, he received his Juris Doctor from Seton Hall University School of Law. He immediately served his judicial clerkship with Judge John E. Keefe, who served in the Superior Court and in the Appellate Division, and then practiced law as a trial attorney for approximately 17 years. In 2000, he became a Certified Civil Trial Attorney by the New Jersey Supreme Court, a designation that was held by fewer than 3 percent of New Jersey attorneys.



Michael Noriega

Associate Justice Michael Noriega was nominated by Gov. Phil Murphy and was sworn in as an associate justice on July 6, 2023. Born on March 27, 1978, Justice Noriega grew up in Union City. He graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in American studies in 1999 and received his law degree from Seton Hall University School of Law in 2002. At the time of his appointment, Justice Noriega was a partner at Bramnick, Rodriguez, Grabas, Arnold, and Mangan, where he specialized in immigration and criminal law. He also was an adjunct professor at Seton Hall School of Law and served as chair of the immigration law section of the New Jersey State Bar Association. Before joining Bramnick, Rodriguez, Grabas, Arnold, and Mangan, Justice Noriega operated his own law firm, Noriega & Associates, where he practiced immigration and criminal law. He began his legal career as an assistant public defender in Essex County.