



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

Administrative Office
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Bldg. 1, Room E-316
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
(304) 340-2305 Jennifer Bundy
(304) 340-2306 April Harless
(304) 558-4219 / TTY
(304) 558-1212 / FAX
Web Site: <http://www.state.wv.us/wvsca>
Twitter: [WVCourts](https://twitter.com/WVCourts)
Information Services Division
Email: Jennifer.Bundy@courtswv.gov
Email: April.Harless@courtswv.gov

Franklin Cleckley receives 2011 Liberty Bell Award **For immediate release Tuesday, March 8, 2011**

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. – The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia today presented the 2011 Liberty Bell Award to former Justice Franklin D. Cleckley.

Chief Justice Margaret L. Workman presented the award to former Justice Cleckley during a ceremony held after the Court heard an Argument Docket at the West Virginia University College of Law, where the former Justice is now the Arthur B. Hodges Professor of Law.

The Liberty Bell Award is presented each year to a person who has “promoted a better understanding of the rule of law, encouraged greater respect for the law and the courts, stimulated a sense of civic responsibility, or contributed to good government in the community,” according to criteria set by the American Bar Association.

“Frank Cleckley has demonstrated an extraordinary lifelong commitment to the legal profession. He has made significant contributions to the rights of all West Virginians and to the development of our jurisprudence,” Chief Justice Workman said. “His firm belief in the basic principle that justice is a fundamental right for all people has made our state a better place to live. He has been an incredible and dynamic teacher of the law, and he has been relentless in his pursuit of a better understanding of the rule of law and the courts throughout our state.”

Justice Cleckley received his undergraduate degree at Anderson College in Anderson, Indiana, and his law degree from Indiana University School of Law at Bloomington in 1965. He served three years as a Navy JAG officer then attended Harvard University, where he received his L.L.M. in 1969, before pursuing post-graduate studies at Exeter University in England.

Justice Cleckley joined the faculty at the West Virginia University College of Law in 1969. On May 3, 1994, former Governor Gaston Caperton appointed him to the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, making him the first African-American Justice in West Virginia. Justice Cleckley chose not to seek election to the Supreme Court and instead returned to the College of Law at the end of 1996.

During his time as a Justice, he authored more than 100 majority opinions in addition to concurring and dissenting opinions.

In 1990, Justice Cleckley established The Franklin D. Cleckley Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization designed to help give former convicts educational and employment opportunities. In 1992, the Franklin D. Cleckley Symposium was established at West Virginia University to bring distinguished members of the civil rights and African-American communities to the campus as lecturers. At Mercer University, in Macon, Georgia, the Franklin D. Cleckley Award is given by the Black Law School Association to an attorney who has made an outstanding effort at community service.

Chief Justice Workman said, "His name will go down in state history as one of the absolute giants of our legal system. But there will also be countless people who will always remember the quiet, unheralded ways he has helped them. It is for his countless contributions to West Virginia and beyond that I believe he is deserving of the Liberty Bell Award."

Justice Cleckley has received many other awards, including the Civil Libertarian of the Year Award from the West Virginia Civil Liberties Union, the Thurgood Marshall Award from the West Virginia NAACP, the West Virginia Common Cause Award for Public Service, the Public Citizen of the Year Award from the West Virginia Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and the West Virginia Human Rights Commission Civil Rights Award.

Justice Cleckley had tears in his eyes as he received the Liberty Bell award from Chief Justice Workman and said simply, "I'm very, very, very happy that I received the award. The Court has really honored me with this award. I'm so happy."

##