



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Justice John Hutchison to be Chief Justice in 2022, Justice Beth Walker to be Chief Justice in 2023

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Justice John Hutchison will be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia beginning January 1, 2022. The Supreme Court has also designated Justice Beth Walker to serve as chief justice in 2023.

Justice Walker will serve as acting chief justice in 2022 whenever Chief Justice Hutchison is unable to participate in a case.

“It has been a joy and the greatest honor of my life to serve on the Supreme Court. I have spent most of my adult life in public service, and I look forward to serving the state in a new way, as chief justice in 2022,” said Justice Hutchison. “Chief Justice Evan Jenkins has done great work this year laying the foundation for a new level of courts in West Virginia, and I look forward to leading the judiciary as we open the Intermediate Court of Appeals on July 1.”

Justice Beth Walker said, “I am looking forward to assisting Justice Hutchison in his role as Chief Justice in 2022, as we all look ahead to more important work including the new Intermediate Court of Appeals. The justices continue to work together as a team, and I look forward to leading that team again as chief justice in 2023. I remain committed to our mission of transparency and accountability and maintaining the trust and confidence of West Virginians in the integrity of our courts.”

Current Chief Justice Evan Jenkins visited all 55 counties in West Virginia in the past few months to express the Supreme Court’s sincere appreciation for the important work its 1,500 employees performed during the COVID-19 pandemic; oversaw the inclusion of a new civility pledge all attorneys take to be authorized to practice law in West Virginia; and put in place a new method for safe, secure access to the courts for victims of rape, sexual abuse, and domestic violence.

“I have been honored to serve as chief justice this year and to maintain our commitment to follow the Constitution and uphold the rule of law. I have complete confidence in Justice Hutchison and Justice Walker’s leadership next year,” said Justice Jenkins.

Justice Hutchison was appointed to the Supreme Court in December 2018 by Governor Jim Justice and was elected in June 2020 to a term ending December 31, 2024. He previously was appointed to the bench in the Tenth Judicial Circuit (Raleigh County) by then-Governor Gaston Caperton in 1995. He was elected to that seat in 1996 and re-elected in 2000, 2008, and 2016.

As a circuit judge, Justice Hutchison was a member of the Supreme Court's Mass Litigation Panel and was a judicial representative on the Commission to Study Residential Placement of Children. He was appointed several times to sit on the Supreme Court when a justice was recused. He also served as treasurer, secretary, vice-president, and president of the West Virginia Judicial Association and was chairman and vice-chairman of the association's legislative and pensions committees.

He was born and raised in Beckley. He has a 1972 bachelor's degree in history and political science from Davis and Elkins College and a 1980 law degree from West Virginia University College of Law.

He was assistant basketball coach at Davis and Elkins College (1972 to 1974) and was dorm director and assistant basketball coach at Concord University (1975 to 1977). After law school, he practiced law in Raleigh County for ten years with Gorman, Sheatsley and Hutchison. In 1991, he opened the Nationwide Insurance West Virginia Trial Division Office and served as its managing trial attorney for four years.

Justice Hutchison is proud to have been named a West Virginia Bar Foundation Fellow in 2020, to have received the Liberty Bell Award in 2019, and to have been named a Champion of Children by the Raleigh County Child Advocacy Center in 2018.

He is married to Victoria Lagowski Hutchison, and they have two children and three grandchildren.

Justice Walker was elected to the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia on May 10, 2016, becoming the first justice elected in a non-partisan race. She took office on January 1, 2017, and served as chief justice in 2019.

Justice Walker is active on social media and passionate about public engagement and civics education. She and her friends Justice Rhonda Wood of the Arkansas Supreme Court and Chief Justice Bridget McCormack of the Michigan Supreme Court host the podcast Lady Justice: Women of the Court. It features discussions of the judicial branch of government and their experiences on their state's highest appellate court. The podcast is available online at www.ladyjusticepod.com.

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