

Official newsletter of the
Pennsylvania Judicial System

AOPC CONNECTED

SPECIAL EDITION, OCTOBER 2022



*In Remembrance of
Chief Justice Max Baer*



*In Remembrance of
Chief Justice Max Baer*

On the first of the month, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court sadly confirmed the sudden and tragic passing of Chief Justice Max Baer who died at his home near Pittsburgh at 74 years old.

A lasting legacy

Chief Justice Baer, born David Max Baer, served on the Court since 2003, becoming the state's 57th chief justice in 2021 and leaving a legacy that will long be remembered. A committed and loving husband, father and grandfather, his vibrant energy will remain a force of goodness for everyone who had the pleasure to meet him.

He would say, "All you try to do is the right thing...and how can it be a bad job if all you try to do is the right thing all day every day?"

A large part of his eternal memory will be his efforts to better protect and care for dependent children across the state through his initiative to create the Office of Children and Families in the Court (OCFC).

Something Chief Justice Baer believed in deeply and instilled in his children and grandchildren – "For the next generation, we will show up."

Recalling their father's legacy at his service last week, the Chief's sons said he believed that champions were made when no one was looking – and that their father always showed up – for his wife, Beth, children, grandchildren, friends, colleagues, and the people of Pennsylvania.

He was proud of many things; more than anything – his family. But he also had a soft spot for babies, an example of which could be found in his Pittsburgh office where he had a bulletin board of every baby born to someone in his office (including some puppies).

Not surprising, given his love for his own family, that he would love others and show it in his work. When he loved, it was unconditional.

Chief Justice Baer revolutionized the process to better serve families, believing that if you love children, you must try to help their parents. When and if that couldn't work, other parental figures had to be found – he hoped within their extended family. He believed very much in safe family members as a way of reducing trauma for children and allowing children a connection to their heritage.





The judicial reforms that Baer instituted in Allegheny County were nationally recognized and replicated in family courts throughout the state and country. His vision extended beyond Allegheny County as he ascended to the Supreme Court and continued his passion for children and families, leading the Court with the utmost collegiality, trust and professionalism.

He was immensely proud of the state’s child welfare reform work and greatly admired and supported the judges overseeing dependency court. As such, he would never take credit himself, but instead would say all the credit belongs to all of the judges, attorneys, child welfare professionals and everyone else who was willing to examine their practice and make it better.



The success of the Children’s Roundtable structure, including the local Children’s Roundtables, the Leadership Roundtables and the State Roundtables is due in large part to Justice Baer’s belief and leadership. He wasn’t shy about praising the members of those groups – who were responsible for the real change happening in Pennsylvania to better help children and families.



As the justice of longest and continuous service on the Court, now-Chief Justice Debra Todd offered her deepest condolences to Chief Justice Baer’s family, friends and colleagues on behalf of the Court, explaining how tremendous of a loss this is for the Court and all of Pennsylvania.

“Pennsylvania has lost a jurist who served the Court and the citizens of the Commonwealth with distinction,” Chief Justice Todd said. “Chief Justice Baer was an influential and intellectual jurist whose unwavering focus was on administering fair and balanced justice. He was a tireless champion for children, devoted to protecting and providing for our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.”



“His distinguished service and commitment to justice and fairness spanned his decades on the bench – first as a family court judge in Allegheny County and eventually as administrative judge in family court before being elected to serve on the Supreme Court,” she said.

Looking back

After graduating from the Linsly Military Institute in Wheeling and then the University of Pittsburgh in 1971, Justice Baer obtained his J.D. from Duquesne University School of Law in 1975.

He served as deputy attorney general of Pennsylvania from 1975-1980 then held a private law practice for nine years prior to being elected as an Allegheny County common pleas judge in 1989.

Among his many honors and awards throughout his notable legal career include the following:

- Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Adoption Advocate of the Year (1997)
- Robert S. Steward Award for Distinguished Service to Pennsylvania Families (1998)
- Child Advocacy Award for Legal Contributions Advancing the Welfare of Our Nation's Children (1999)
- Pennsylvania Bar Association's Child Advocate of the Year (2000)
- Pennsylvania's Council of Mediators, Most Valuable Peacemaker (2004)

Chief Justice Baer loved his family, helping children and his job as a Supreme Court justice – and there is no better way to show him in action and doing what he loved than through a selection of pictures memorializing his life and what he lived for.

