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Contact Florence Nathan
732-937-7518

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NJ State Bar Foundation to Award Medal of Honor to Hon. Edwin H. Stern and Hon. Lawrence M. Lawson

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation's highest award--the prestigious Medal of Honor--will be conferred on the Hon. Edwin H. Stern, retired Presiding Judge, Appellate Division, and the Hon. Lawrence M. Lawson, retired Assignment Judge, Monmouth Vicinage, for their longtime dedication to enhancing New Jersey's legal legacy. The award, given each year to candidates who have made exemplary contributions to improving the justice system, will be presented at the Foundation's Annual **Medal of Honor Awards Reception on Wednesday, June 10**, at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick.

Judge Stern

"I am honored to be joining the ranks of the fine lawyers who have received this award from this worthwhile organization," said Judge Stern. "I strongly support the mission of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, which is to help the public better understand the law. Through its variety of educational programs for adults and students, the Foundation is providing residents of the state with a better understanding of the legal process."

Sustained outstanding achievement on the bench for 27 years has been the hallmark of Judge Stern's distinguished career, which included a temporary nine-month assignment to the New Jersey Supreme Court. During his judicial career, Judge Stern authored more than 3,600 written decisions and more than 450 published opinions. He was the 2011 recipient of the New Jersey State Bar Association's Arthur T. Vanderbilt Award for Judicial Administration, named a Fellow of the American Bar Association in 2013, received the Honorable Lawrence A. Whipple Memorial Award from the Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of New Jersey in 2014, and is listed in Best Lawyers---Commercial Litigation. He is currently Of Counsel, Business and Commercial Litigation, at Gibbons Law Firm and is on the roster of arbitrators for the American Arbitration Association.

"Aside from his legal acumen and reputation for honesty, Judge Stern never lost perspective on his sworn commitment to the public's right to have its disputes addressed fairly, judiciously and speedily, and the daily challenges facing practicing lawyers," said his former law clerk, Fernando M. Pinguelo, Esq., now Partner and Chair of Cyber Security at the Scarinci Hollenbeck law firm, who nominated him for the Medal of Honor. "The process and focus I observed as he worked through each set of facts and legal issues never became routine--there was nothing routine about how he addressed each party, salient fact and legal issue before rendering his ruling."

Judge Stern is a member of member of two New Jersey Supreme Court committees: the Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct, and the Special Committee on Rules of Professional Responsibility. Also a member of the Civil Practice Committee, he serves on the editorial board of the New Jersey Law Journal and is a frequent lecturer on professional and judicial ethics for the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education. Additionally, on the national stage, he is an active elected member of the American Law Institute, a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, and remains a member of the Council of Chief Judges of State Courts of Appeal, of which he was a member of the Executive Committee before his judicial retirement.

"The New Jersey State Bar Foundation is proud to bestow its highest honor on Judge Stern," said New Jersey State Bar Foundation incoming president Steven Richman. "In an exemplary career as a jurist spanning nearly three decades, his thoughtful opinions are evidence of his dedication to ethics, professionalism and the rule of law. His qualities are emblematic of those to which we should all aspire. It is with great pleasure that I present him with the Medal of Honor."

After earning a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University, the future Judge Stern received his J.D. from Columbia Law School. Having served in private practice in Newark, he became the First Assistant Prosecutor and Acting Prosecutor of Hudson County. Afterwards, he became Director of Criminal Practice in the Administrative Office of the Courts. Following that, he moved to the Attorney General's Office, eventually becoming Deputy Attorney General in charge of Appellate Litigation in the Division of Criminal Justice. He returned to the judiciary to work with the Speedy Trial Coordinating Committee chaired by New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Wilentz, who four years after Judge Stern had been appointed to the bench, assigned him to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court. Chief Justice Deborah Poritz designated him a Presiding Judge in 2004, serving in that capacity until he reached his mandatory retirement age in June 2011. He also temporarily served on the Supreme Court from September 2010 to until his June retirement date.

He and his wife, a teacher of sculpting and ceramics, reside in Monroe Township. They are the parents of three sons: a marketing executive, high school principal and a trial attorney with the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. Judge and Mrs. Stern also have two grandchildren.

Judge Lawson

"I am truly honored and most humbled to have been selected as a 2015 recipient of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation Medal of Honor Award," said Judge Lawson. "I am grateful for the unwavering support of the Bar and my colleagues as we worked toward the common goal of providing exemplary service and justice for all."

Dedication to the rule of law and equality of justice have been the hallmarks of Judge Lawson's illustrious judicial career. Appointed as a judge of the Superior Court, Civil Division, Monmouth County in 1987, he was soon assigned to the Criminal Division. After seven months he was designated the Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division. In 1990 he returned to the Civil Division as a trial judge. Two years later he again returned to the Criminal Division, where he served as a trial judge until 1993, when he received a distinctive appointment as the first African-American jurist to become the Assignment Judge of the Monmouth Vicinage and of the state of New Jersey. He remained as Assignment Judge for 21 years, until his retirement last September.

"I have been blessed," he said, "to have been able to contribute to the improvement of the justice system over the years as a judge. As an attorney and a jurist, I am also grateful for the dedication of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation in providing free legal education and information regarding the law to the public, and grant funding for programs throughout the state to bring much needed legal assistance and knowledge to the legal community and the citizens we serve."

Among the awards he has received are the Garden State Bar Association's Roger M. Yancey Award for Outstanding Achievement as a Jurist (twice); Pioneer of Justice from the Monmouth Vicinage, Distinguished Service Award from the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education (NJICLE) and the New Jersey State Bar Association's (NJSBA) Arthur T. Vanderbilt Award for Excellence in Judicial Administration. He serves on several Supreme Court committees, including the Committee on Minority Concerns, Committee on Evidence, Joint Committee on Criminal Justice, and the Standards for Comprehensive Enforcement Program Committee. He is a member of the United States District Court of New Jersey Panel of Mediators.

"Judge Lawson was dedicated to the bench for nearly 30 years," said Marie Accardi, Esq., president of the Monmouth Bar Association, who nominated him for the award. "His contributions and achievements are well known. He was a trailblazer and an active member of the community. He was not only the first African-American Assignment Judge [in the Monmouth Vicinage] but also the first African-American mayor of Neptune, NJ. He served the community well, with integrity and professionalism. We were fortunate to have him as Assignment Judge for so many years. He was just amazing."

A member of the American Bar Association, Garden State Bar Association, Monmouth Bar Association and NJSBA, Judge Lawson also serves on the last's Commission on Unmet Legal Needs. He is a trustee of the Retired Judges Association of New Jersey, a member of the Special Committee on Attorney Ethics and Admissions and serves on Sen. Cory Booker's Judicial Appointment Committee. He is also a longtime lecturer for NJICLE and other legal education programs.

Currently Of Counsel at McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, Tinton Falls, where he focuses on mediation and arbitration matters, he serves on the firm's Diversity Committee.

Judge Lawson received his B.A. from Bowie State University and his J.D. from Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law. During his 13 years of private practice, he served five years as the Municipal Prosecutor, City of Asbury Park and two years as Mayor of Neptune Township, where he was born and raised, before being appointed to the bench. He currently resides in Manalapan.

"Judge Lawson is an outstanding public servant dedicated to serving the Bar and protecting the rights of the citizens of New Jersey," said incoming Foundation president Steven Richman. "He has rightfully earned a reputation for excellence as a lawyer and judge. Throughout his long career, he has maintained the highest standards of ethics and truly ennobled our profession. I am privileged to present him with the Foundation's Medal of Honor."

The Foundation's Annual Medal of Honor Awards Reception begins at **6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10**, and is open to everyone. For more information, please contact the Bar Foundation at 732-937-7518 or **mail a check for \$100 per person** made payable to the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, to the New Jersey State Bar Foundation Awards Reception, One Constitution Square, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1520, **no later than June 3**.

To place a **congratulatory message** to Judge Stern and/or Judge Lawson in the program journal, please contact Cynthia Pellegrino at cpellegrino@njsbf.org or 732-937-7507.

Founded in 1958, the New Jersey State Bar Foundation is the educational and philanthropic arm of the New Jersey State Bar Association. The Bar Foundation's mission is to promote public understanding of the law through a free, comprehensive public education program. Among its activities, the Foundation conducts seminars and conflict resolution training, publishes materials, operates a videotape loan library and speakers bureau, and coordinates elementary, middle and high school mock trial competitions.

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