



Administrative Office of the Courts

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Justice Barbara Vigil to retire from New Mexico Supreme Court

SANTA FE – Justice Barbara J. Vigil plans to retire from the New Mexico Supreme Court at the end of June. She is the longest-serving member of the current Court.

Justice Vigil joined the state's highest court in December 2012, and was Chief Justice in 2014-16.

The justice was a district court judge in the First Judicial District of Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and Los Alamos counties from 2000 until her election to the Supreme Court. She became chief judge of the district in 2011. For 10 years while on the district court, she presided over Children's Court cases, which include juvenile delinquency and child abuse and neglect matters.

"It has been a tremendous honor to serve as a judge and justice over the past 21 years. The time has come for me to step down from the Supreme Court so that I may devote my time and energy to serving vulnerable communities in a more direct manner," Justice Vigil said. "I have enjoyed fulfilling the critical legal work of the Court, but perhaps equally rewarding has been the opportunity to work with countless professionals and volunteers to bring forth initiatives designed to improve our system of justice."

"I am hopeful that my service to the people of New Mexico over the past two decades in this honorable role will endure long after my tenure on the Court comes to an end. I thank everyone who has helped my service be so fulfilling," said Justice Vigil.

During her judicial career, Justice Vigil helped establish a continuum-of-care model for improving juvenile justice that brings together community leaders to identify local needs and allocates grant funding for services for vulnerable youth. The justice also has played a leading role in the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative that is a collaborative effort of the judicial branch of government, the Children, Youth and Families Department, the New Mexico Association of Counties, the Public Education Department and tribal communities.

During this year's legislative session, Justice Vigil advocated for approval of a Court-backed measure to improve legal representation for children and parents in abuse and neglect cases. While serving on the district court, she instituted and presided over two juvenile drug court programs to provide effective drug treatment for youth charged with drug offenses in Santa Fe and Rio Arriba counties.

As a member of the Supreme Court, the justice oversaw the reorganization of the Judicial Education Center, which is based at the University of New Mexico Law School and provides training for judges. She has helped to strengthen relationships between tribal courts and state courts through her participation and leadership on the New Mexico Tribal State Judicial Consortium.

Justice Vigil was born and raised in New Mexico. She received a juris doctorate from the UNM Law School in 1985, and earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from New Mexico State University. She was valedictorian of her high school graduating class at St. Catherine's Indian School in Santa Fe.

"I have served with some outstanding jurists, who have taught me the importance of humility, diligence, leadership, collegiality and hard work. I have also worked side by side with incredible devoted judicial staff and employees around the state who have shown me over the years, but even more so during the pandemic, what it is like to be committed public servants devoted to the important work of our courts," said Justice Vigil.

The process for filling a court vacancy calls for a bipartisan Judicial Nominating Commission to interview applicants and recommend nominees to the governor for possible appointment.

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[View a video statement by Justice Barbara J. Vigil](#)

Contact Beth Wojahn in the AOC communications office to download the video file, 505-469-5415.



Justice Barbara J. Vigil
Photo courtesy of the NM Supreme Court