

NORTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT



Justices

Chief Justice Gerald W. VandeWalle

Justice Dale V. Sandstrom

Justice Carol Ronning Kapsner

Justice Daniel J. Crothers

Justice Lisa Fair McEvers

A Few Historical Facts about the Supreme Court

- the Court hears about 250 cases a year.
- originally 3 justices and 6 years terms
- expanded to 5 justices starting in 1910
- served 10 years terms starting in 1934
- the justices cast lots after the first election for length of term and chief justice
- court had no permanent home until 1910
 - held terms in Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks
 - now travels only for special sessions
- no-party ballot since 1910
- longest 5 justices have sat together without a change 10 yrs, 8 months
- until 1967, chief justice position rotated; the justice with the shortest term and not filling a vacancy was the chief justice
 - changed to election by judges in the state in 1967
- courtroom named after/dedicated to late Chief Justice Ralph Erickstad
- early adopter of internet technology
 - one of first courts to put opinions on the web
- pictures of all the justices hang in the hallway outside the courtroom
- vacancy during a justice's term filled by gubernatorial appointment
 - governor has option to call a special election

A Few Historical Facts about the Justices

- the oldest judge at start of service
 - P.O. Sathre (2nd time) (74)
- the youngest judge at start of service
 - Guy Corliss (31)
- the oldest justice when left the Court
 - P.O. Sathre (86)
- longest serving justice
 - A.M. Christianson (39 yrs, 1 mon.)
 - 4 have served 30 years or more
- shortest serving justice
 - John Knauf (4½ mon)
 - 9 served less than 2 years
- median length of service
 - 10 years
 - (26 have served 10 years or more, 26 have served less than 10 years)
- # of Justices
 - 50 (52 with Sathre and Johnson twice)
- justices who served twice
 - P.O. Sathre (about 13 years between)
 - J. Phillip Johnson (almost 18 years between appointments)
- 8 foreign born justices
 - Iceland (3), Norway (1), India (1), Scotland (1), Ireland (1), Canada (1)
- first North Dakota born justice
 - James Morris (1893)
- first female Justice
 - Beryl Levine (1985)
- 8 justices never went to law school

Who can be a justice?

ANYONE!! as long as they meet a few basic requirements (Art. VI, §10 Const.):

- citizen of the United States
- resident of North Dakota
- learned in the law

‘Learned in the law’ has been interpreted to mean ‘admitted to the bar’.

See the Supreme Court’s website at <http://www.ndcourts.gov> for more information on the Supreme Court and District Courts

On the website, you can get current legal news, search and read Supreme Court opinions, access Court Rules, locate district court cases and calendars, connect to the North Dakota Legal Self-Help Center, and find links to other legal materials.

North Dakota Supreme Court
600 E. Boulevard
1st Floor Judicial Wing
Bismarck, ND 58505

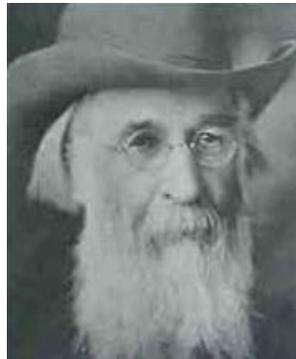
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Further history on the Court and some of the Justices has been detailed in the following articles in the North Dakota Law Review or Gavel:

-The North Dakota Supreme Court : A Century of Advances, Herbert L. Meschke and Ted Smith, *76 North Dakota Law Review* 217-310 (2000). [also on the Court’s website at <http://www.ndcourts.gov/History/Century/>]

-Judicial Values: The Justice Robinson Experience, Herbert L. Meschke and Ted Smith, *82 North Dakota Law Review* 25 (2006).

-Justice Morris Writes Home from Nuremberg, Herbert L. Meschke and Ted Smith, *58 Gavel* 2 (May, 2011).



Justice Robinson, arguable the most colorful justice, campaigned with a cowbell tied around his neck and rang it to get attention

Other history articles on the Court’s website:

- A Historical Sketch of the Supreme Court of the Dakota Territory and North Dakota Supreme Court
- A History of North Dakota's District Judges
- Murder and death by hanging: Capital crimes and criminals executed in northern Dakota Territory and North Dakota, 1885-1905
by historian Frank Vyzralek.
- Four Capital Murder Trials Since the Last Execution in 1905
by Justice Dale V. Sandstrom
- North Dakota's Last Lynching
by Supreme Court staff attorney Mike Hagburg
- Remembering John Burke
Justice, Governor, Legislator, U.S. Treasurer
- Reading the Law
The story of Judge O.A. Schulz
- Schooling in Liberal Law
The early days of the Univ. of N.D. Law School
- Ralph J. Erickstad, former Chief Justice
- Ralph J. Erickstad 1922-2001
- Remembering Ralph J. Erickstad
- Ralph J. Erickstad Courtroom dedicated
- Erickstad sculpture unveiled
- Profile of former Chief Justice Ralph J. Erickstad

