



**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE**

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PRESS RELEASE

PASSING OF CHIEF U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE PAMELA L. REEVES

U.S. District Judge Pamela L. Reeves, who rose from humble beginnings in Southwest Virginia to become the first woman president of the Tennessee Bar Association and then Chief United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee, died today after a two-year battle with cancer. Her illness was diagnosed in December 2018, but she had continued her judicial duties almost without interruption. She became the Chief Judge in April 2019, succeeding U.S. District Judge Thomas A. Varlan.

Judge Reeves was nominated to the judgeship by President Obama on May 16, 2013 and was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on March 5, 2014. She began her tenure as an Eastern District judge on March 10, 2014.

She has received many awards over the years, the most recent being the University of Tennessee Distinguished Alumna Award, the highest award given by the university. The award recognizes a UT graduate who has attained extraordinary distinction and success in their field and whose achievements have brought credit to the university and benefit to the community.

Last year, the Knoxville Bar Association honored her with the 2019 Judicial Excellence Award, an award that is rarely given, and more recently she received the Tennessee Bar Association's first-ever Professionalism Award.

Writing about her Judicial Excellence Award in the KBA publication DICTA, attorney William Vines said Judge Reeves is a "first person." He noted that she became the first female president of the Tennessee Bar Association, the first female chair of the Knox County Election Commission, the first female president of the American Association of Mediators, the first female Article III judge in the Eastern District of Tennessee, and finally, the first female Chief Judge of the Eastern District of Tennessee.

Vines added, "Throughout all of those life experiences, all who know her would say she's one of the sweetest people we know."

Judge Reeves was the oldest of five sisters. The family lived in a four-room house in Grayson County, Virginia, and Judge Reeves would tell how it had no running water until she was 10 years old, recalling that she would go to a nearby creek to retrieve water for the household.

At her investiture ceremony in May 2014, her husband, Knoxville Law Director Charles Swanson, said, "Pam's great exposure to the world around her was through her participation in 4-H, sponsored by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture."

"When Pam was only in the eighth grade, she went to a 4-H convention in Chicago," Swanson said. "I don't think she has ever recovered from that. The four H's in the 4-H organization stand for health, head, hands and heart. In my opinion, Pam is going to be a great judge, because she continues to adhere to the precepts she learned in her 4-H experience," Swanson said.

Judge Reeves received her undergraduate degree in history from the University of Tennessee and her law degree from the UT College of Law in 1976. She was the first in her family to attend college. Her four sisters also are college graduates.

Judge Reeves and her husband have a son, Reedy, and a daughter, Amanda, both graduates of the University of Virginia School of Law.

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