

NEWS RELEASE



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Indiana Chief Justice to Receive National Award

Des Moines, Iowa – Hon. Randall T. Shepard, Chief Justice of the Indiana Supreme Court, has been selected as the recipient of the Sixth Annual Dwight D. Opperman Award for Judicial Excellence. Chief Justice Shepard was chosen by a three-member panel: Hon. Judith S. Kaye, former Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals; Justice Ronald Robie, California Court of Appeal–Third Appellate District; and Judge Frederic Rodgers, Gilpin Combined Courts, Colorado. The award will be presented in early 2010.

Chief Judge Kaye, chair of the selection panel and last year's Opperman Award recipient, said of Chief Justice Shepard, "He is a shining star of the American justice system, the pride of lawyers and judges--especially State Court judges--in and well beyond Indiana, and an example of the success of the great objectives of the American Judicature Society."

In his nomination letter, Hon. John G. Baker, Chief Judge of the Indiana Court of Appeals, said of Chief Justice Shepard: "[he] makes those of us from Indiana proud to be Hoosiers."

Chief Justice Shepard, a seventh-generation Hoosier, started his judicial career in 1980 as a judge of the Vanderburgh Superior Court in his hometown of Evansville, Indiana. He was appointed to the Indiana Supreme Court in 1985 and was named Chief Justice eighteen months later at the age of 38, then the youngest chief justice in the nation. He is a graduate of Princeton University and Yale Law School and earned an LL.M. from the University of Virginia School of Law.

Chief Justice Shepard has authored more than 850 majority opinions and has taught and lectured at Yale Law School, New York University School of Law, and Indiana University School of Law at Indianapolis. He is recognized as a national authority on judicial ethics and legal professionalism. Among his leadership roles at the national level, he has served as President of the Conference of Chief Justices and the National Center for State Courts, Chair of the Appellate Judges Conference of the American Bar Association, and Chair of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. In addition to leading the state courts of Indiana for more than two decades, he has been an active force in historic preservation, state and local government reform, and improvement of children and family services. He has received numerous national awards for his work to promote professionalism and diversity in the legal profession and to educate the public about the role of the courts.

The American Judicature Society (AJS) created the Opperman Award to honor state trial and appellate judges for distinguished judicial service. The award is named for Dwight D. Opperman, former chairman and CEO of West Publishing Company. Opperman is a former AJS vice president, director, and executive committee member and currently serves on the AJS Board of Directors as a Distinguished Lifetime Director.

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Founded in 1913, AJS is a leader in improving our nation's courts. The AJS mission is to ensure a fair, impartial, independent judiciary; improve the criminal justice process; educate the public; and build confidence in the justice system. For more information on AJS, visit our website at www.ajs.org.