



Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan

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Third Judicial Circuit Statement on The Passing of Former Chief Judge Virgil Smith

We at Third Judicial Circuit mourn the loss of our former colleague, former Chief Judge Virgil Clark Smith. The native Detroiters was highly respected in the Michigan community and served as a Judge, Legal Advisor and State Legislator, throughout his decorated career spanning more than 40 years.

Judge Smith was appointed to the Wayne County Circuit Court Bench in 2004 by then Gov. Jennifer Granholm where he was the Presiding Judge of the Family Division – Juvenile Section. He then served as the first African American Chief Judge for Third Circuit Court from 2009 to 2014, before returning to the Juvenile Section as Presiding Judge until his retirement in 2018. Previous to his role on the Bench, Judge Smith served in the Michigan House of Representatives from 1977 to 1988 where he chaired the judiciary subcommittee on court reorganization. He was then elected to the Michigan State Senate in 1988 and served as the Senate Democratic floor leader from 1995 until 2001.

In his last role before his appointment to Third Circuit Court, Judge Smith was appointed to the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office as its Division Chief of Legislation and Community Outreach from 2002 to 2004.

Judge Smith graduated from Detroit's Pershing High School in 1965, earned his undergraduate degree in political science from Michigan State University, and his law degree from Wayne State University. After law school, Judge Smith became a legal advisor to community groups for Wayne County Legal Services, and later worked as Senior Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of Detroit Law Department.

"He was a great litigator and inspiring leader in everything he did," said Third Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Patricia Perez Fresard, who was a colleague of Judge Smith's for 14 years. "He was a mentor to me and many other members of the Bench, court employees and lawyers. He was disciplined, strict but fair and always extremely organized. Chief Judge Smith completed every task with purpose and integrity, and he rewarded those who met his high expectations."

"The State of Michigan, Wayne County and the City of Detroit lost an incredible public servant and even a better person," Fresard said. "He was also my friend and someone I turned to many times for advice and support. He will be sorely missed."



Our Mission: *We serve the community by providing accessible and equal justice for all.*

Our Vision: *We are an exemplary and innovative Court leading with integrity in providing justice and public service.*

For more information, visit our website www.3rdcc.org.

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