

Chief Judge of the State of New York



Janet DiFiore

Statement From Chief Judge Janet DiFiore
on the Passing of Associate Judge Richard D. Simons

With a heavy heart, I announce the death of former Associate Judge Richard D. Simons who served as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals from 1983 to 1997 and as Acting Chief Judge from November 1992 to March 1993. He was a Judge – and a man – of extraordinary wisdom, honor, and kindness.

Judge Simons was born on March 23, 1927 and received his education in the public schools in Niagara Falls and Yonkers, New York. After serving in the United States Navy from 1945 to 1947, he graduated from Colgate University in 1949 and received his law degree from the University of Michigan Law School in 1951.

In 1963, he became a Judge at the age of 36, one of the youngest State Supreme Court Judges in New York history. He wore the robes with dedication and distinction, serving as a Justice of both the Third and Fourth Departments of the Appellate Division, until, in 1983, Governor Mario Cuomo appointed then-Justice Simons to serve as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals. Judge Simons authored over 300 signed opinions during his tenure, decisions that were uniformly praised by the bench and bar for being thoughtful, thorough-yet-succinct and non-ideological.

After his retirement from the Court in 1997, Judge Simons served part-time as Chief Trial Judge and Chief Appellate Judge of the Oneida Indian Nation, Chairman of the New York State Bar Association Task Force on Court Reorganization, Chair of the New York State Bar Foundation, Director of the Capital Defender Office and Jurist in Residence at Syracuse University College of Law. In January 2000, Judge Simons was awarded the New York State Bar Association's Gold Medal for Distinguished Service, the Association's highest award.

On behalf of the Judges and professional staff of the Court of Appeals and the Unified Court System, we send our deepest condolences to the family of Judge Simons.

July 18, 2022