

Statement to the Cook County Board of Commissioners

Rhoda D. Sweeney

March 12, 2014

My name is Rhoda Davis Sweeney. I retired from the position of Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County on November 30, 2013. During the years that I served on the bench, I sat in the Juvenile Division, Traffic Court, Housing Court and First Municipal non-jury civil court.

Prior to my tenure on the bench, I served as an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney, where I was assigned to prosecute in the 1st Municipal Branch Criminal Courts and in the Branch Drug Courts. My last position as a state's attorney was supervisor of the Narcotics Forfeitures division.

I have also been a defense attorney in both state and federal courts, where I had extensive experience with gangs upon being appointed by federal judges in drug and gang cases.

Also pertinent to my qualifications is my 17 years of volunteer work as a group leader at the McDermott Haymarket Center, which is a facility that has a prison alternative floor. Over the years, I have worked with recovering alcohol and drug addicts, many of whom have been imprisoned in the Cook County Jail, as well as state prisons.

Accordingly, I have had unique experiences which qualify me to serve on the Justice Advisory Council. I am very eager to assist the Council in addressing the challenges our criminal justice system presents and to serve the citizens of Cook County.

Thank you.

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CAREER HISTORY

Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County

1. Assigned to First Municipal Division,
Housing Court, Non-Jury Contacts and Torts Court, December 2003-Present
2. Assigned to Juvenile Justice Division, September 1995-December 1996

Staff Counsel, City of Chicago, Department on Aging, October 1998- September 2003

1. Prepared and reviewed Monitoring Instruments, Agreements, Ordinances and Requests for Proposals
2. Interfaced with Federal and State Regulatory Departments regarding Federal, State and Local laws, Regulations and policies that relate to Long Term Care Facilities. Served as Long Term Care Ombudsman for Nursing Home Residents
3. Monitored Legal Providers for City of Chicago Seniors with Housing and Guardianship issues
4. Co-Chaired City of Chicago Care Giving Initiative
5. Served as Member of City of Chicago Domestic Violence Community Based Development Grant Committee
6. Served as Member of Mayor's Oversight Implementation Committee for Violence Prevention

Senior Associate, Schiller, DuCanto and Fleck, 1997-1998

Represented Clients in Domestic relation Actions, including Marital Dissolution and Separation, Child Custody and Support actions, Paternity, Juvenile and Adoption action.

Private Practice, Law Offices of Rhoda Davis Sweeney, 1987-1995 and 2003

1. Practiced in State and Federal Courts
2. Focused on areas of Criminal and Family Law with extensive trial experience
3. Served as Federal Defender Panel Attorney
4. Participated in the Chicago bar Association In-Court Referral program
5. Practiced before the Hearing Board of the Chicago Police Department
6. Represented claimant in People v. 6232 N. La Crosse, Chicago Illinois, 156 Ill.3d 453 (1994) which resulted in an Illinois legislative amendment to the Narcotic Forfeiture Statute to provide for jury trials

Assistant Cook County State's Attorney, 1981-1987

1. Litigated and negotiated all Cook County narcotics forfeiture actions as Supervisor of Narcotics Forfeitures

2. Worked closely with the Chicago Police Department on forfeiture and prosecution of narcotics crimes
3. Prepared and presented oral arguments to the Illinois Supreme Court in People v. Kurt Bartall, 98 Ill. 294, (1983), People v. Audrey Bushnell, 101 Ill. 2d 261, (1984), People v. Narcisco Cruz, 111 Ill. App. 3rd 95 (1982)
4. Conducted daily Criminal prosecutions in the areas of Domestic Violence, Misdemeanors and Felonies
5. Served in Appellate Division and prepared and delivered briefs and oral arguments in over 100 appeals, both as appellee and appellant

Management Training Consultant 1978-1979

Lectured and trained participants on compliance with Equal Opportunity in Employment regulations and laws

Speech and Language Pathologist, private Practice and Chicago Public Schools, 1962-1978

Worked extensively with handicapped children and adults who suffered neurological damage from strokes

EDUCATION AND BAR ADMISSION

1. Supreme Court of Illinois
2. Federal Trial Bar Northern District Court of Illinois
3. Chicago-Kent College of law, Illinois Institute of Technology, Juris Doctorate, With Honors, 1981
4. Northwestern University, Master of Arts, learning Disabilities, 1962
5. Northwestern University, bachelor of Science, Speech and Language, 1961

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

United States Department of State

Lecturer for United States Department of State in Malaysia on American Criminal Justice System and Trademark and Copyright Laws to Malaysian Judges, Prosecutors and Customs Officers, June 2000.

Federal Magistrate Judge Selection Committee, 2002

Chicago Bar Association

1. Criminal Law Committee
2. Elder Law Committee

Illinois State bar Association

1. Vice-Chair, standing Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law
2. Criminal Law Committee
3. Assembly Member, 1984-1990 and 1991-1998
4. Elder law Council, 2001-Present

American Bar Association

1. Prosecution and Defense Function Committee
2. Corrections and Sentencing Committee
3. Mandatory Literacy in the Prisons Proposal Committee
4. Ad Hoc Committee on Narcotics Forfeitures

American Inn of Court

Abraham Marowitz Chapter, President

Women's Bar Association of Illinois

Illinois Attorneys for Criminal Justice

Board Member, 1995

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Grant Park Concerts Society

Board Member

Classical Arts Society

Board member

McDermott Haymarket Foundation

Weekly counseling sessions with women recovering from drug and alcohol abuse, 1997-Present

Honors

"Humanitarian Award" recognition by the McDermott Haymarket Foundation, October 2000