

Court of Appeals of Ohio



NINTH APPELLATE DISTRICT

Judge Donna Carr is retiring after 31 years on the bench

Judge Donna Carr will retire from the Ninth District Court of Appeals on May 31, 2026, after serving almost 28 years with the Court of Appeals, 31 years as a judge, and 10 years with the Summit County prosecutor's office.

Judge Carr was born in Elkins, West Virginia and moved to Ohio when she was six. She knew from a young age that she wanted to be a lawyer. After she graduated from Kent State University, she received her law degree from The University of Akron School of Law. She began her legal career while still a law student, working as a law clerk in the appellate division of the Summit County Prosecutor's Office. Foreshadowing her future career, Judge Carr argued appeals before the Ninth District Court of Appeals as a law student with a Legal Intern Certificate. Upon graduation from law school, Judge Carr served as an Assistant Prosecutor for Summit County from 1984-1993 and Chief Counsel-Civil Division from 1993-1995. In January 1995, she was appointed as the interim Summit County Prosecutor.

Later in 1995, Judge Carr was appointed to the Akron Municipal Court and elected to the same position in November 1995. She served on the Municipal Court until her appointment to the Ninth District Court of Appeals in July 1998. Judge Carr was elected to the Court of Appeals in November 1998 and reelected in 2004, 2010, 2016, and 2022. During her tenure with the Ninth District Court of Appeals, Judge Carr has been assigned to more than 8,200 cases. She has been the author judge on about 2,700 of those cases and, some would joke, has written almost that many concurring and dissenting opinions.

Only two judges have served the Court longer than Judge Carr, who has been a judge for the Ninth District for more than a quarter of the Court's 105-year existence. Judge Carr has served as Presiding or Administrative Judge six times. During her long tenure with the Ninth District, she has served with half of the Court's judges.

Judge Carr's judicial service has extended beyond the Ninth District. She has served as a visiting judge with the Ohio Supreme Court ten times. Judge Carr's first assignment to the Supreme Court came at the end of the last century and she has sat as a visiting judge with the Supreme Court in every decade of this century. Judge Carr has also served as a visiting judge for half of Ohio's appellate districts.

Beyond the bench, Judge Carr has been active in a number of ways to improve the judiciary and judicial system. She served on the Interpreter Services Subcommittee of the Supreme Court's Racial Fairness Implementation Task Force and was later appointed to the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Interpreter Services, serving as the Chair during her time on the Committee and working on the Interpreter Bench Book and Bench Card for Judges.

Judge Carr has served on the Commission for the Rules of Superintendence and the Ohio Judicial Conference Education Committee. She has regularly served as a Judicial Mentor for

new appellate court judges. Judge Carr was elected to several leadership positions by the Ohio Courts of Appeals Judges Association. The Association consists of all 69 appellate court judges from Ohio's 12 Districts. Judge Carr served as Secretary/Treasurer for 2015, Chief Judge-Elect for 2016, and Chief Judge for 2017.

While Judge Carr has been active around the State, she has remained focused on the citizens of the Ninth District. Judge Carr points to one initiative as a highlight of her career. Shortly after joining the Ninth District, Judge Carr arranged the Court's first school visit that took the Court to a local school to hear oral arguments. This eventually led to the creation of the Courtroom in the Classroom program. Through this program, the Ninth District has held oral arguments more than 60 times at high schools and colleges in the Ninth District before thousands of students, sharing with the students the opportunity to see firsthand the work of the Court and to interact with judges and lawyers in a positive way.

That spirit of sharing with others includes Judge Carr's strong faith. She has been a longtime volunteer with Love Akron and has participated in many other faith-based programs and activities over the years. Judge Carr's faith and community spirit were recognized when she was selected as the 2021 recipient of the Judge Brenda Burnham Unruh Servant Leader Award.

The judges and staff of the Ninth District will miss Judge Carr's experience, wisdom, and spirit when she retires. We wish her well as she leaves the bench and focuses all of her love and energy on her family while she continues to quietly perform good deeds to help those in her community.