



United States District Court District of Minnesota

Warren E. Burger
Federal Building and U.S.
Courthouse
316 North Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

Edward J. Devitt
U.S. Courthouse and
Federal Building
118 South Mill Street
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Gerald W. Heaney
Federal Building and U.S.
Courthouse and
Customhouse
515 West First Street
Duluth, MN 55802

Diana E. Murphy
U.S. Courthouse
300 South Fourth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

NEWS RELEASE

United States District Court, District of Minnesota Mourns the Death of U.S. District Judge David S. Doty



MINNEAPOLIS, MN – Senior U.S. District Judge David S. Doty of the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota died on June 27, 2026, just three days shy of his 97th birthday.

Chief U.S. District Judge Patrick J. Schiltz said: "Judge Doty devoted his entire professional life to serving others—as a Marine, as a lawyer who served not only clients but his community in many ways, and as a U.S. District Judge for nearly four decades. Despite his remarkable accomplishments, he was a genuinely humble man. He treated everyone—from the guy who shined his shoes to Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court—the same way: with kindness and compassion and a sincere interest in their lives. I will particularly miss his sense of humor. He always had a smile on his face."

Judge Doty was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota by President Ronald Reagan and received his commission on May 21, 1987, succeeding Judge Miles W. Lord. He assumed senior status on June 29, 1998, and continued to maintain a significant caseload until just a few months before his death.

Born on June 30, 1929, in Coon Rapids, Minnesota, Judge Doty grew up in Minneapolis, where he graduated from Marshall High School before earning a bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of Minnesota. In 1952, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. During six years of military service, he served at sea, commanded an infantry company and an artillery battery, and concluded his military career as a Captain in Okinawa, Japan.

Judge Doty graduated with honors in 1961 from the University of Minnesota Law School, where he served as an editor of the *Minnesota Law Review*. He then practiced law for 26 years, primarily with the firm of Popham, Haik, Schnobrich, Kaufman & Doty. His practice focused on trial and administrative law, and he represented numerous individuals and organizations, including the Metropolitan Transit Commission. He also served as a Special Assistant Attorney General and taught labor law at William Mitchell School of Law.

Throughout his career, Judge Doty was deeply engaged in Minnesota's legal and civic communities. He served as president of both the Minnesota State Bar Association and the Hennepin County Bar Association and participated on numerous committees of each organization. His civic service included terms on the Minneapolis Public Library Board and the Minneapolis Foundation Board, as well as service as president of the University of Minnesota Law School Alumni Association.

During his distinguished judicial career, Judge Doty presided over thousands of civil and criminal cases. He was nationally recognized for his work in complex litigation, including several landmark disputes involving the National Football League. He was renowned for his unflappable demeanor, his fairness, and his common sense.

Judge Doty's colleagues shared the following remarks on his death:

Senior Judge Paul A. Magnuson, who served with Judge Doty during his entire career on the federal bench and served as Chief Judge from 1994 to 2001, said: Judge David Doty exemplified and delivered 'Equal Justice under the Law.' He was a good marine, a good lawyer, a good judge, and most of all a good friend. We were the two most senior active judges on the Court and, as such, had a long deep and personal friendship. May God rest his soul."

Retired Judge James M. Rosenbaum, who served as a District Judge from 1985 until his retirement in 2010 (including serving as Chief Judge from 2001 to 2008), said: "David was a lawyer's lawyer. He was President of the Bar and one of the pillars of the legal community. And he was always, first and last, a Marine. A consummate gentleman."

Senior Judge Michael J. Davis, who joined the Court in 1994 and served as its Chief Judge from 2008 to 2015, said: "It was my honor to share a floor in the Minneapolis courthouse with Judge Doty for 10 years. His cigar smoke in the hallway signaled that he was hard at work doing justice."

Senior Judge John R. Tunheim, who joined the Court in 1995 and served as its Chief Judge from 2015 to 2022, said: “Judge Doty was the best colleague a judge could have -- wise, thoughtful, and always very helpful. A walk down the hall to his chambers always gave me a delightful conversation -- great guidance and some really good laughs. Judge Doty was an exceptional trial lawyer - one of Minnesota’s best - and his skills in the courtroom made him a terrific judge from the start.”

Senior Judge Susan Nelson, who worked closely with Judge Doty as a U.S. Magistrate Judge from 2000 to 2010 – and continued to work with him following her appointment as a District Judge in 2010 – said: “Judge Doty embodied the highest ideals of the profession, as a champion of civility and professionalism, inspiring generations of lawyers. His life was defined by public service - first to the country in the United States Marine Corps, then to the bar, as President of both the Hennepin County Bar Association and the Minnesota State Bar Association, and finally as a highly revered jurist, with an unmatched work ethic, serving the federal bench for nearly forty years, well into his 90s.”

A full obituary and arrangements are pending. Additional questions can be directed to Public Information Officer Rebecca Parks at Rebecca.Parks@mnd.uscourts.gov.

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