AWARDS & ACCOLADES | 11.15.2024

Chief Justice Margaret Marshall Receives Sandra Day O'Connor Award

On November 14th, The National Judicial College honored Choate Senior Counsel Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall (Ret.) with its prestigious Sandra Day O'Connor Award for extraordinary service and commitment to justice. Chief Justice Marshall was recognized for her remarkable career as the first female Chief Justice in the Massachusetts Supreme Court's 300+ year history and for her groundbreaking opinions.

During her fourteen years on the Supreme Judicial Court, Chief Justice Marshall wrote more than 300 opinions, including the 2003 decision in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, which declared that the Massachusetts Constitution prohibits the state from denying same-sex couples' access to civil marriage. The ruling made Massachusetts the first state to legalize gay marriage. In her opinion, Marshall took a strong stance against all forms of discrimination, stating that the "Massachusetts Constitution affirms the dignity and equality of all individuals. It forbids the creation of second-class citizens." A long-time advocate of access to justice for all, Chief Justice Marshall implemented innovative procedures for self-represented litigants and strengthened pro bono services by the bar.

Prior to her service on the Supreme Judicial Court, Chief Justice Marshall was in private practice for sixteen years and was a partner at Choate, before joining Harvard University as Vice President and General Counsel in 1992. She rejoined Choate in 2012 where she continued her efforts on the firm's community outreach, pro bono and diversity programs, mentoring lawyers, and providing senior level counsel to clients on special projects.

She has received numerous awards recognizing her judicial and other accomplishments, including the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession's Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, the ABA's Pursuit of Justice Award, the Massachusetts Bar Association's Chief Justice Edward F. Hennessey Award for outstanding leadership in the administration of justice, the Boston Bar Association Award for Judicial Excellence, Yale Law School's Alumni Award of Merit and the Yale Medal, and the inaugural Harvard University Professional Women's Achievement Award.

Margaret H. Marshall
Senior Counsel

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