

Hon. Harry D. Leinenweber

Senior Judge, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

by Carrie E. DeLange



Carrie E. DeLange is a white collar litigation associate at Drinker Biddle & Reath. She focuses her practice on internal investigations and complex litigation. DeLange has represented clients in response to investigations by the Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and other regulatory agencies. Her experience includes class action litigation, business disputes, antitrust and allegations of fraud. Prior to joining Drinker Biddle & Reath, DeLange completed two federal clerkships for the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, under Hon. Harry D. Leinenweber (2012-2013) and Hon. Philip G. Reinhard (2013-2015).

In June, Hon. Harry D. Leinenweber celebrated his 80th birthday. This year he also celebrates his 31st year as a federal judge in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

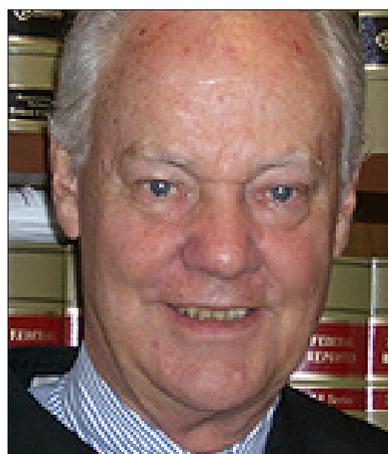
To say that he has had a successful career as a legal professional is an understatement. One of the qualities that best exemplifies Judge Leinenweber is his passion for the law. This passion is best demonstrated by his relentless work ethic. Although Judge Leinenweber assumed senior status on June 3, 2002, he has never taken a reduced caseload, which all judges who assume senior status may elect to do. Instead, he maintains a full caseload and remains as dedicated to his work on the bench now as he has for the last 31 years.

Honoring an individual like Judge Leinenweber is not a difficult thing to do. He embodies all of the great qualities that many federal judges possess. Judge Leinenweber is a hardworking, intelligent, reasonable, and pragmatic man. These are qualities that have contributed to his success as both a lawyer and a federal judge. Most people who know Judge Leinenweber well will tell you that his most impressive quality is his calm temperament and the genuine care he has for those around him.

The Early Years

Judge Leinenweber was born in Joilet, Ill. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1959 and earned his law degree from the University of Chicago in 1962.

After graduating law school, Judge Leinenweber stayed close to his roots and began his legal career in private practice in Joilet. He quickly established himself as a successful attorney. Only one year after his law school graduation, Judge Leinenweber served as a part-time city attorney on behalf of the City of Joilet. In 1968, he was special prosecutor for Will County, Ill. Later, he was special counsel to the Village of Bolingbrook and the Will County Forest Preserve. Thereafter, he continued his commitment to public service as a member of the Illinois General Assembly from 1973 to 1983. After his time with the legislature, he continued his career in private practice at the law firm Dunn, Leinenweber & Dunn, Ltd.



A Call From the President

In the winter of 1985, it was just another day at the office for Leinenweber when he learned his career as a successful lawyer in Joilet could change forever. In fact, Leinenweber was at Montgomery Ward's corporate headquarters preparing to take a deposition for a lawsuit he was defending for the major retailer.

Shortly after he arrived at Montgomery Ward, the receptionist informed him that his office had called and wanted him to call back immediately. Leinenweber did as he was instructed to learn what was so urgent. His secretary informed him that the president of the United States had called and asked him to return his call. At that point, Leinenweber's secretary gave him President Ronald Reagan's direct number.

Filled with disbelief and excitement, Leinenweber direct dialed the president of the United States. To his surprise, President Reagan answered and asked whether Leinenweber was willing to give Reagan permission to commission Leinenweber as a federal district judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Ecstatic, Leinenweber gave the president his formal permission and hung up the phone. When asked what he did immediately after his conversation with the president, Leinenweber explained that he proceeded to take the deposition.¹

A few months later, Judge Leinenweber was nominated officially by President Reagan to become a

federal district judge in the Northern District of Illinois. Shortly thereafter, Leinenweber was confirmed by the Senate and began his career as a federal district judge for the Northern District of Illinois in January 1986.

Career on the Bench

The rest is history, so they say. It is remarkable that Judge Leinenweber has dedicated over 30 years of his career (and his life) to the federal judiciary. He has presided over a plethora of different cases ranging from prostitution cases (formerly a federal crime) to terrorism charges to patent litigation. When asked why he has never elected to take a reduced caseload, Judge Leinenweber is likely to tell you that he truly loves his job and fears that he would be bored with a reduced amount of work. In addition to maintaining his full caseload, Judge Leinenweber also elects to preside over all discovery motions and settlement conferences when possible, as opposed to referring these matters to the magistrate judge. This is the judge's preference because he wants to be as involved with all of his cases as he can be.

The Chambers Family

Judge Leinenweber's passion for his work emanates throughout his chambers. Indeed, the people Judge Leinenweber surrounds himself with are an integral part of his success on the bench.

Those close to Judge Leinenweber will tell you that one of his best qualities is the way he values his family and treats those around him with the upmost respect. This is obvious in both his personal and professional life and is perhaps his biggest secret to his continued success.

Judge Leinenweber has had the same personal assistant for more than 20 years. His courtroom deputy has assisted him for more than 30 years. Both are critical to the "well-oiled machine" that is Judge Leinenweber's chambers. Although both his assistant and deputy may have had aspirations of early retirement or may have longed for a reduced caseload when the judge assumed senior status, both would tell you that Judge Leinenweber is the best boss a person could ask for and they will always be willing to work hard for him.

Since he was appointed to the bench, Judge Leinenweber has hired his law clerks to serve one-year terms with alternating start dates in September and January. While this may seem like a short time to become acclimated to the job and to the judge, most of his clerks will tell you that there was no choice but to learn quickly, since Judge Leinenweber's docket (and the judge himself) never slow down.

Somehow Judge Leinenweber finds a way to manage it all. He travels with his wife, spends time with his children and grandchildren, gets to know all of his clerks personally, knows about current affairs, politics, and sports, all while immersing himself in his cases and the nuances of the law. As a law clerk, this is nothing short of inspiring.

In addition to the incredible amount of legal knowl-

edge and practical experience Judge Leinenweber's law clerks gain, they also get something even more meaningful; they become part of Judge Leinenweber's chambers family. Every year, Judge Leinenweber's clerks celebrate his birthday by inviting the judge's former clerks and members of Judge Leinenweber's family to a Chicago Cubs game (the judge's favorite Chicago sports team). The turnout is remarkable. The judge's clerks from his early years on the bench often lament about the new clerks not even being born when they first worked for the judge. Watching Judge Leinenweber interact with all of his clerks and reminisce about old cases or old "war stories" is heartwarming.

Last year marked Judge Leinenweber's 30th anniversary on the bench. To celebrate the momentous occasion, the judge's long-time assistant (along with the help of Judge Leinenweber's wife) planned a surprise party for the judge. Guests included former clerks, colleagues, and federal judges. As a gift, all of the judge's clerks were asked to write about their fondest memories of their clerkship and the judge.

The memories submitted by all of the clerks (young and old) describe the great legal professional and person that is Judge Leinenweber. One clerk wrote, "I can unequivocally say, without hesitation, that I could not imagine a better way to have spent my first year as an attorney than the opportunity I had to serve as a clerk in your chambers. The myriad lessons you provided have carried into my practice. You did not overtly offer these lessons. Rather, I learned from you by observing how you worked—how you inserted practicality and reasonableness into the law, regardless of how contentious or complex the situation may have been[.]"

Another clerk echoed similar sentiments noting that Judge Leinenweber "is humble and quiet. He always treats everyone in chambers with respect and talks with them like they are his peers. And more than anything, he loves three things: his family, the work he does, and the Cubs." Another clerk wrote he is a "great judge and a great boss because he believes in the abilities of the people who work for him, which in turn inspires his clerks and his staff to work hard for him."

The consistency with which all of the clerks remarked of Judge Leinenweber's character and their clerkship experiences further demonstrates just how exceptional Judge Leinenweber is. A story that most of Judge Leinenweber's clerks recall is when the judge first hired them and told them that their clerkship with him would be "the best job" they ever had. Most clerks would agree that Judge Leinenweber was correct when he told them that. However, what Judge Leinenweber may not realize is that the job is not the "best job" because of the experience, the access, or the excitement. Instead, it is the best job because each clerk has the privilege to get to know Judge Leinenweber as a federal judge and a friend.

Thank you Judge Leinenweber for your service to the

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Judicial Profile Writers Wanted



The *Federal Lawyer* is looking to recruit current law clerks, former law clerks, and other attorneys who would be interested in writing a judicial profile of a federal judicial officer in your jurisdiction. A judicial profile is approximately 1,500–2,000 words and is usually accompanied by a formal portrait and, when possible, personal photographs of the judge. Judicial profiles do not follow a standard formula, but each profile usually addresses personal topics such as the judge's reasons for becoming a lawyer, his/her commitment to justice, how he/she has mentored lawyers and law clerks, etc. If you are interested in writing a judicial profile, we would like to hear from you. Please send an email to Sarah Perlman, managing editor, at tfl@fedbar.org.

yet another “first” as the first female chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. She remembers that period as a rewarding but extremely challenging one. Among her accomplishments over her seven-year tenure as chief judge, she is particularly pleased to have participated in the finalization of the district court's Civil Justice Reform Act plan.

Off the bench, Rambo's volunteer activities reflect her lifelong interest in all things educational. She has served as a director of the Pennsylvania Bar Institute, the continuing legal education arm of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, and on the magistrate judges committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States. She has not forgotten the law school that helped her realize her dream of becoming a lawyer. In what is a reflection of perhaps her greatest loyalty, she has contributed all manner of support to the Dickinson School of Law, including serving as an adjunct professor, on the board of governors, the board of counselors, and presently on the board of overseers. She has received five honorary degrees, including one from Dickinson College and one from Dickinson School of Law.

As much as Rambo is known for her dogged work ethic, she is not all work and no play, despite what many assume from her serious demeanor on the bench. She greatly enjoys friends and family, and holds a deep appreciation of the outdoors. Over the years, she has been an avid equestrienne, gardener, hiker, and world traveler. Time—and a few injuries—have dictated that she curb the most rigorous of her activities, but her love of travel, friends, family, and the outdoors endures.

Rambo took senior status in 2001. She maintained, however, a caseload substantially larger than that required of senior judges. Her ingrained work ethic would not allow her to ignore the backlog of cases

caused by long-standing judicial vacancies in the Middle District of Pennsylvania. Nowadays, with the vacancies filled, and having celebrated her 81st birthday, Rambo has yet to slow down. She continues to preside over a sizeable caseload with her trademark dedication and diligence. Chief Judge Christopher C. Conner says of Rambo's contributions: “Sylvia Rambo is an extremely bright, hardworking, and dedicated jurist. She cares deeply about the federal judiciary as an institution, and she personifies everything that is right about the institution.”

When asked to what and whom she attributes her success, Rambo responds modestly. She credits her work ethic to her mother, and she recalls the guidance of her late husband, George Douglas, a prominent Central Pennsylvania attorney. Early on, she says, Douglas advised her to follow his simple rule: “Be prepared, be prepared, be prepared.” She also mentions the guidance of a somewhat more famous adviser, Socrates, whose words embody Rambo's approach to her judicial duties: “Four things belong to a judge: to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly, and to decide impartially.” Many who have practiced in Rambo's courtroom, or shared the bench with her, or passed through her chambers as law clerks, attest that she took this guidance to heart. She is known to be unfailingly attentive, courteous to counsel, fair to parties, impeccably prepared, and deeply thoughtful in making decisions.

That young girl on the school bus reached her goal and surpassed it, becoming a member of the federal judiciary widely admired for her integrity, diligence, and judicial temperament. Reflecting on her long judicial career, Judge Sylvia H. Rambo said, in her understated style, “It has been full of challenges and rewards that I never anticipated when I decided, as an 11-year-old girl, that I *would* become a lawyer.” ☺

Leinenweber Profile *continued from page 45*

bench, for your inspiring work ethic and passion for the law and for giving me the best job I'll ever have. ☺

Endnote

¹Justin Leinenweber, *Someone You Should Know: Hon. Harry Leinenweber*, 15 PUBLIC SERVANT 1 (April 2014).