



**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE
WESTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**COURT MOURNS THE PASSING OF
SENIOR U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE JOHN G. HEYBURN II**

LOUISVILLE, KY—Today, our family, court, and nation lost a Great American in the passing of Judge John G. Heyburn II. Earlier today he passed away at home surrounded by his family.

In 1992, Judge Heyburn was appointed to the bench and served as Chief Judge from 2001 to 2008, where he established a reputation for court governance by consensus and an ability to engender camaraderie among fellow judges and enthusiastic participation from staff. Judge Heyburn also led the judiciary in significant national roles that strengthened its independence and improved its handling of complex cases. Judge Heyburn continued his judicial service in spite of a hard-fought battle with cancer over the past few years. His health took a sudden decline in recent weeks.

Judge Heyburn is survived by his wife, Martha, two sons, Will and Jack, his mother, Frances, sister Frannie Pistell, and brothers, Franklin and Henry.

His family appreciates the outpouring of love and support from all of the communities that were important to Judge Heyburn, including his colleagues on the District Court and on the Judicial Panel for Multidistrict Litigation, those involved with the Administrative Office of the Courts, his staff and law clerks, Harvard roommates and running teammates, golfing friends, and leaders and members of the Louisville community.

“The passing of Judge John Heyburn leaves a void in our Court family that will be impossible to fill,” said Chief Judge Joseph H. McKinley, Jr. “A brilliant jurist, an accomplished leader, locally and on the national level, a mentor and a friend, whose passion, strength and courage was evident in all that he did, has, and will forever be, an inspiration to us all. We will miss him greatly.”

“John Heyburn and I served together on the federal bench in Louisville for over 22 years,” said Senior Judge Charles R. Simpson III. “He was both a close colleague, and a dear friend. His passing is a great loss, not only to the Court, but to the legal community and indeed the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

“He was full of real-world common sense. John had a gifted legal mind, but he also had the ability to see beyond the legal arguments and into the humanity of those who came before him. John would often stop by my chambers at the end of the day to chat, compare notes and talk through all kinds of issues, from thorny legal matters to UK basketball. John could be serious,

but he also had a great laugh and could find amusement in the odd predicaments we often see in our cases. He was a gentle person who treated everyone with dignity.”

“I never asked John how he would like to be remembered, but knowing him as I do, I believe he would want to be thought of as a great husband and father first, and a good judge second. That was how he was. As for me, I shall miss him greatly.”

Among his former law clerks, Judge Heyburn is remembered for a contagious joy for the law, a deep commitment to fairness, and a strong dedication to mentoring others.

“When I think of Judge Heyburn’s countless good qualities, the one that stands out is his fundamental decency,” said former law clerk Ellen Cox Call. “He is one of the kindest and most gracious gentlemen that I have ever known.”

Details on a celebration of Judge Heyburn’s life will be announced shortly.

Please direct any questions to Vanessa Armstrong at (502) 625-3500.