

*BIOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL F. O'NEILL, J.S.C. (Ret.)*

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Michael F. O'Neill, J.S.C. (Ret.) was appointed to the Superior Court bench in February 2013. He was initially assigned to the Family Division of Somerset County Superior Court, where he handled contested and uncontested divorces, unmarried support/custody issues, domestic violence complaints, domestic violence contempt proceedings, termination of parental rights and child support enforcement. In September 2014, he was assigned to the Civil Division of Hunterdon County Superior Court, where he sat until reaching mandatory retirement age in February 2023.

As the sole civil judge assigned to Hunterdon County Superior Court from 2014-2023, Judge O'Neill oversaw over all civil matters filed in the county. Additionally, he was assigned to case manage all environmental filings in Vicinage XIII, as well as a variety of complex insurance coverage disputes. He also served as the designated Probate Part (Chancery Division) judge for Hunterdon County and as the Presiding Judge of the Special Part in Vicinage XIII (Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties). Since 2020, he has served as a member of the New Jersey Supreme Court Civil Practice Committee.

During his tenure in Hunterdon County, Judge O'Neill resolved thousands of Law Division and Chancery Division ( Probate) matters through settlement, jury and non-jury trials. He presided over numerous high-profile cases including class actions,

prerogative writ actions, probate matters, legal and medical malpractice suits, a wide array of employment, discrimination, and contract disputes, as well as catastrophic personal injury matters.

Judge O'Neill successfully case managed and issued decisions in numerous complex bodily injury and property damage matters and related "long-tail" insurance coverage disputes. Such cases typically involved allegations of defective products being placed into the stream of commerce, frequently resulting in hundreds or thousands of mass tort bodily injury and/or property damage claims, implicating decades of liability insurance coverage. The case management of environmental contamination suits required special attention and judicial oversight, as they typically involved allegations of widespread and long-standing contamination of the environment -- including the aquifer, ground and surface waters, and alleged "natural resource damages."

In the land-use field, Judge O'Neill presided over scores of cases covering a wide range of zoning and development rights issues. For example, he issued multiple decisions in a series of suits filed in opposition to the proposed redevelopment of the historic Union Hotel in downtown Flemington, New Jersey. Municipal officials had declared the hotel and surrounding area as "in need of redevelopment." Following the issuance of several definitive rulings, and subsequent appeals, the parties ultimately arrived at a settlement which permitted the redevelopment project to proceed. In the class action arena, Judge O'Neill oversaw the multi-million-dollar

settlement of a class action suit filed on behalf of inmates at the Edna Mahon Correctional Facility.

Prior to serving in the judiciary, Mr. O'Neill was in private practice with the Bedminster, New Jersey law firm of Purcell, Mulcahy, O'Neill & Hawkins. He was a senior partner at the firm for over 25 years, handling a wide variety of civil litigation matters. In 2005, Mr. O'Neill became co-chair of the firm's Alternative Dispute Resolution ("ADR") practice group. He was on the roster of approved mediators for New Jersey's state-wide civil mediation program, having successfully completed the civil mediation training course approved by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

While in private practice, Mr. O'Neill specialized in the handling of complex insurance matters and developed expertise in the fields of products liability, professional liability, corporate/commercial disputes, construction litigation, employment contracts and disputes, land-use/zoning, intellectual property disputes, environmental cleanup, mass toxic torts, personal injury, and property damage litigation. He was also an experienced appellate advocate, having successfully argued appeals to the Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Mr. O'Neill served as a Counselor of the Joseph Halpern American Inn of Court from 1995 through 1999. He was certified as a Civil Trial Attorney by the New Jersey Supreme Court Board on Attorney Certification from 2004 until his appointment to the bench in 2013 and was recognized as one of the "Best Lawyers in America" (2006–

2013). His bar admissions included the state and federal courts in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Mr. O'Neill is a 1975 graduate of St. Francis College (PA). He earned his J.D. degree (cum laude) from Seton Hall University School of Law in 1980, where he served as the Editor in Chief of the Seton Hall Law Review. Upon graduation from law school, he served as law secretary to the Honorable Mark A. Sullivan, Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court (1980-1981 term).