



# Supreme Court of Illinois

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## **JUSTICE ROBERT THOMAS TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE CHICAGOLAND SPORTS HALL OF FAME**

Justice Robert R. Thomas of the Illinois Supreme Court will be inducted into the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame during ceremonies to be held on Wednesday, September 19. The Induction Ceremony is the highlight of the organization's annual dinner that will be held at the Hawthorne Race Course in Cicero.

Justice Thomas is one of 20 members of the Class of 2012 who were chosen for their "spectacular achievements in varied arenas."

The Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame pays tribute to the sports legends whose careers have thrilled, entertained and enriched lives with unforgettable moments of greatness.

The roster of previous inductees includes Chicago Blackhawk left wingman Bobby Hull; boxing great Muhammad Ali; White Sox legend and second baseman Nelson "Nellie" Fox; Cubs second baseman Ryne Sandburg; Olympic gold medalist and DePaul University alum Mabel Landry Staton; baseball announcer Harry Caray; Chicago Bear running back Walter Payton, who was Thomas' teammate; and Mike Ditka, who was Thomas' coach when he played with the Chicago Bears.

"What an honor to be included among such a talented group of Chicago athletes and sports personalities," Justice Thomas said. "It was a genuine privilege to play 10 seasons with the Chicago Bears, and I am grateful to the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame for adding me to its ranks."

Justice Thomas entered the field of law and became a judge after a successful career as a kicker in the National Football League for 12 years, 10 of them with the Chicago Bears from 1975 to 1984. He enrolled in and attended law school while still playing professional football and was frequently seen after practices and between games in the library at Loyola University School of Law. He is a 1974 graduate of the University of Notre Dame, was an Academic All-American at Notre Dame and kicked the winning field goal in the 1973 National Championship game for the Irish in the Sugar Bowl against Alabama.

**MORE**

## **Justice Thomas to be inducted into the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame**

### **Add One**

Justice Thomas was inducted into the Academic Hall of Fame in 1996 and was a NCAA Silver Anniversary Award Winner in January 1999. That award goes to college athletes who have made lifetime contributions 25 years after their collegiate playing days.

Justice Thomas graduated from Loyola University School of Law in 1981. He was a practicing attorney in the area of civil litigation from 1981 to 1988, when he was elected Circuit Judge of the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit which is comprised of DuPage County.

While with the Circuit Court, Justice Thomas presided over civil jury trials and was appointed acting Chief Judge from 1989 to 1994. He was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court for the Second Judicial District in 1994, where he served until his election to the Illinois Supreme Court in November 2000.

Justice Thomas was elected by his colleagues on the Supreme Court to serve as Chief Justice from 2005-2008, the first Chief Justice from DuPage County in the Court's nearly 200 year history.

One of the major accomplishments during Justice Thomas' tenure as Chief was recommending the establishment of the Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism, an outgrowth of the Committee on Civility, in 2001. The Commission promotes principles of integrity and civility among all Illinois lawyers and judges.

“You hear a lot about how the practice of law is different now than in days past when a lawyer’s handshake meant something and a lawyer’s word was his bond,” Justice Thomas said when recommending the Committee. “That may be an oversimplification, but in this day and age with competition in the profession for dollars and clients, activities sometimes degenerate into a Rambo-style, win-at-all cost attitude by attorneys.”

Going hand in hand with a goal of improved professionalism among attorneys is the implementation by the Court under Justice Thomas of new rules requiring continuing legal education for all practicing Illinois lawyers and judges.

Under Justice Thomas' tenure as Chief Justice, the Court also made big strides in the identification and implementation of information technologies that advance the services and functions of Illinois courts. Among the most visible improvements is the availability of the Court’s oral arguments in video and audio format on the Court website. The arguments are posted on the website shortly after they are formally heard by the Supreme Court.

He is a member of the DuPage County Bar Association and the Illinois Judges Association.

Justice Thomas was named DuPage County Bar Association's Lawyer of the Year in 2001. In 2005, the Illinois Judges Association honored him with their "Professionalism Award". He received Loyola University's Distinguished Jurist Award in 2006 and was named "Judge of the Year" in 2008 by the Illinois Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

Justice Thomas is the second Illinois Supreme Court Justice to be inducted into the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame.

**MORE**

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Add Two**

Justice Anne M. Burke was inducted into the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame in 1996. She worked with children with physical and mental disabilities as a physical education teacher with the Chicago Park District, and from that experience went on to found the Chicago Special Olympics in 1968.

She later served as a director of that organization as it grew to become the International Special Olympics represented in more than 160 countries.

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