

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JUSTICE KILBRIDE HONORED BY ILLINOIS BAR FOUNDATION

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Thomas L. Kilbride was honored Friday morning by the Fellows of the Illinois Bar Foundation with its Distinguished Service to Law and Society Award.

The award was given to Justice Kilbride in recognition of a legal career which included consistent efforts at representing the ordinary man and woman and his vigorous advocacy for legal help for the poor.

“The greatest compliment any judge can receive is to say that his is a good lawyer,” said Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Moses W. Harrison II who introduced Justice Kilbride at an awards breakfast at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel. “It means one who is learned in the law, hardworking and thorough in analysis. Justice Kilbride is a good lawyer.”

A staunch advocate of legal aid for the poor, Justice Kilbride practiced as a Legal Aid attorney with Prairie State Legal Services from 1981 to 1987. Prairie State provides legal services to low-income clients on matters involving employment, housing, domestic violence, family law and federal benefits.

In accepting the award, Justice Kilbride encouraged lawyers to continue to support legal programs and services, like Prairie State and the Legal Bar Foundation, which aid the poor and disadvantaged.

"People of low-income are in need of assistance," Justice Kilbride said. "Legal programs need funding for programs to make a legal impact. One of the noblest manifestations of our calling and profession is to respond to the legal needs of people who don't have representation otherwise."

Justice Kilbride, 47, whose legal practice was centered in Rock Island, was elected to the Supreme Court in November 2000 from the Third Judicial District which is composed of 21 Illinois counties.

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“He is a wonderful jurist,” said Umberto S. Davi, vice-chair of the Fellows of the Illinois Bar Foundation. “It’s his attitude about everyday people and about issues that confront people on a daily basis. As a practicing attorney, he specialized in the men and woman and the problems they carried as they walked through his office door.”

Justice Kilbride was born in LaSalle, raised in Kankakee and graduated from Bishop McNamara High School in Kankakee. He received his B.A. degree magna cum laude from St. Mary's College in Winona, Minn., and his law degree from Antioch School of Law in Washington, D.C. in 1981. While in law school, Justice Kilbride completed judicial internships for the administrative assistant to the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and for U.S. District Court Judge Joyce Hens Green.

Before his election to the High Court, Justice Kilbride practiced law for 20 years in the Rock Island area, the last seven as a sole practitioner in general practice, including appeals, environmental law, employment matters and general civil and criminal matters. He has been counsel for the cities of Silvis and Moline, 17 township governments and several other local units of government.

He is past president of the Illinois Township Attorneys Association; a charter member and past vice president of the Illinois Pro Bono Center; and a past member of the Local Government Law Section Council of the Illinois State Bar Association.

Justice Kilbride has represented several environmental organizations, including the Izaak Walton League of Illinois. He represented citizens in opposition to landfills in Hancock, Henry, Macon Rock Island and Wayne counties.

He was a volunteer lawyer for the Childrens' Disability Project and an organizer for the United Farm Workers in Chicago and San Diego.