



CUYAHOGA COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
DIVISION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS

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ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
HON. LESLIE ANN CELEBREZZE

COURT ADMINISTRATOR  
JAMES S. ZAK

JUDGES  
HON. DIANE M. PALOS  
HON. FRANCINE B. GOLDBERG  
HON. TONYA R. JONES  
HON. COLLEEN ANN REALI

For Immediate Release  
January 13, 2023

**Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Domestic Relations Division  
Announces Passing of Retired Judge Cheryl S. Karner**

Cleveland, Ohio: Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Domestic Relations Division Retired Judge Cheryl S. Karner passed away Friday, January 13, 2023. Judge Karner retired from the bench November 30, 2016 after serving for 28 years. Judge Karner was appointed to the Domestic Relations Court bench in February 1989 by Governor Richard F. Celeste. She held that seat in subsequent elections. Before her election to the bench, Judge Karner served as a court referee (1984-1986) and had been an active family law practitioner with leadership positions in her local bar association.

“Judge Karner was a champion for the families in Cuyahoga County. Her insight, knowledge of the law and caring nature was an asset to all those she came in contact with, and she will be greatly missed by her Court family,” said Administrative Judge Leslie Ann Celebrezze.

During her years on the bench, Judge Karner attended to her cases while also committing time, energy, and expertise to various organizations that pursue improvements to the law and the court system. She was elected Chair of the Judicial Conference (2002-2004) which represents all judges in the state of Ohio. Ascending to Chair required a ten-year commitment to the board of that organization in various positions of responsibility.

Her involvement with the Ohio Judicial Conference included a long term as Co-Chair of the Domestic Relations Law and Procedure Committee which met quarterly to review proposed family law legislation and to propose new legislation to help families in divorce or domestic violence situations.

Judge Karner also served as President (1995), Past President (1996-1997) and Vice-President (1993-1994) of the Ohio Association of Domestic Relations Judges (OADRJ). She served as a member of the Ohio Child Support Guidelines Advisory Council, the Ohio Task Force on Family Law and Children, and the Ohio Supreme Court’s Domestic Violence Task Force. While involved in all of these activities for the betterment of the law, she prided herself on her docket being the most efficient and fastest each month, which it was most of the time.

Understanding that long, drawn out cases are unhealthy for families in crisis, she required that the cases be concluded with much care, but also without unnecessary delay

Judge Karner was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Technology Adjudication Resource Center (ASTAR) in Washington, DC which required lengthy training and research on the intersection of law and science. During her years at the Court, she frequently lectured on family law for the National Judicial College, the Ohio Judicial College, the American Bar Association, and local bar associations. Her extensive knowledge was widely shared within the Court and outside the Court. Prior to her career on the bench, Judge Karner served as an officer for the Cuyahoga County Democratic Women's Caucus. She was active in local politics and the promotion of women to elected positions before that was a regular occurrence. She also served as a President of the Cleveland Women's Lawyer's Association.

Judge Diane M. Palos reflected, "Judge Karner's death is a loss to the legal community and to me personally. Over the 38 years that I have known her, although our titles changed a few times, we always worked together. Her priority was the best result for the families going through a divorce at our Court. She was always willing to share insights and to discuss the best way to proceed with a case or a new policy. Her career was a blueprint for public service and her cases were always families not just numbers."

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