

Justice James W. Hardesty graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting in 1970. While an undergraduate student, Justice Hardesty was elected President of the student body and named outstanding senior graduate. Justice Hardesty graduated from the University of Pacific McGeorge School of Law in 1975 and immediately returned to the Reno/Sparks area to enter private practice. He remained in private practice from 1975 to 1998. He received the highest rating of AV by Martindale-Hubbell, a nationally recognized publication of lawyer ratings.

In November 1998, Justice Hardesty was elected District Court Judge for the Second Judicial District of Washoe County, Reno, Nevada. In November 2001, he was elected by his fellow judges to serve as Chief Judge of the Second Judicial District Court, a position to which he was re-elected in November 2003. Justice Hardesty also served as President of the Nevada District Judges Association in 2003.

During his tenure as Second Judicial District Court Chief Judge, Justice Hardesty declined a workload reduction to offset his administrative responsibilities and implemented the following: early case resolution in criminal matters, thus reducing incarceration costs and delayed dockets; an expanded and strengthened drug diversion court and other specialty courts; the re-invigoration of bench/bar committees; the promulgation of “strong Chief Judge” rules; and efforts to create a cohesive court structure through workload assessments and cross-jurisdictional assignments. Justice Hardesty also assumed responsibility for the judicial budget, which included 19 judicial officers and approximately 170 employees, and spoke for the court in the community, developing a rapport with other agencies and stakeholders, such as the limited jurisdiction courts, law enforcement, parole and probation, and the county’s elected and managerial leadership teams that improved the administration of justice in Washoe County.

In November 2004, Justice Hardesty was elected to the Nevada Supreme Court and was re-elected to the Court without opposition in 2010 and 2016. He served as Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court in 2009, 2015, and 2021. In June 2013, Justice Hardesty was unanimously nominated by his colleagues on the Supreme Court for the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, a nomination that was also supported by the Chief Judges for the Second and Eighth Judicial District Courts. In 2014, he led the Nevada Supreme Court’s educational effort to amend the Nevada Constitution to create a Court of Appeals, which the voters approved in the November election. Nevada’s Court of Appeals commenced on January 5, 2015. Justice Hardesty has been a guest lecturer on case management, settlement and evidence for the National Judicial College, State Bar of Nevada, Professional Education Systems, Inc., the Association of Defense Counsel and the Nevada Justice Association. In addition, he has presented annual lectures to the Media Law students at the Donald W. Reynolds School of Journalism, University of Nevada, and Reno.

As a District Court Judge and as a Nevada Supreme Court Justice, he has served on various Supreme Court Commissions including: the Nevada Supreme Court Task Force to create a Business Court in Nevada; the Nevada Supreme Court Task Force studying the Multi-Jurisdictional Practice of Law; the Nevada Supreme Court Commission on Judicial Funding; the Nevada Supreme Court Committee to

Implement Recommendations of the Jury Improvement Commission; the Commission on Statewide

Juvenile Justice Reform; and the Nevada Supreme Court Bench-Bar Committee. Justice Hardesty currently chairs or co-chairs the Nevada Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission; the Nevada Supreme Court Permanent Guardianship Commission; the Committee to Study Evidence-Based Pretrial Release; the Commission on Statewide Rules of Criminal Procedure; the Commission on Preservation, Access, and Sealing of Court Records; the Commission to Study the Adjudication of Water Law Cases; and the Commission to Study Best Practices for Virtual Advocacy in Nevada's Courts. He has also chaired the Nevada Legislature's Advisory Commission on the Administration of Justice; and is the chair of the Nevada Sentencing Commission. Justice Hardesty is a past member of the Nevada State-Federal Judicial Council, serving as chairman from 2009 to 2011 and again from 2014 to 2016.

Justice Hardesty was born and raised in Reno, Nevada. He has been married for 51 years to his wife, Sandy, and together they have two children and five grandchildren. From 1978 through 1991, Justice Hardesty coached Bobby Sox Softball teams that included his daughters. In 1991, his team won the National Fast Pitch Championship. He has been active with the Foster Grandparents Program, served on the Nevada State Board of Education, and is Past President of the Rotary Club of Sparks.