



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Oregon Supreme Court Justice Thomas Balmer Announces Retirement

Justice Thomas A. Balmer will retire from the Oregon Supreme Court on December 31, 2022. Balmer announced his retirement today in a letter to Gov. Kate Brown.

“It has been an honor and the privilege of a lifetime to serve on the Oregon Supreme Court for the past 21 years. I have done my best to live up to my judicial oath to “faithfully and impartially” fulfill my duties as a judge, uphold the constitutional role courts play in our democracy and contribute to a justice system that strives towards ‘equal justice under the law.’”

“Justice Balmer has brought a keen legal intelligence, a commitment to hard work, and a deep understanding of our state to the Oregon Supreme Court,” said Oregon Gov. Kate Brown. “Since his appointment in 2001, including his six years as Chief Justice, he has been wise, open-minded, and independent. I appreciate his more than 20 years of service to the people of Oregon.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Martha Walters said “I have had the amazing good fortune of serving with Justice Balmer since I joined the Court in 2006. He is a true student of the law, bringing his powerful intellect and common sense to every question that comes before us. As our Chief Justice, Tom made the job of leading our courts look simple. Without fanfare, he instigated and completed a myriad of projects designed to modernize and strengthen our courts and to increase access to justice. Even after he stepped down as Chief, Tom continued to advance that work, always keeping the common good at the fore, as he does in every decision he makes. Our court will miss Tom as the leader of our band, and I will miss his every-day presence as a partner and a friend.”

Balmer was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2001, after private practice in Portland, Boston, and Washington, D.C., and public service in the U.S. Department of Justice and as Deputy Attorney General in the Oregon Department of Justice. He served as the Oregon Supreme Court Chief Justice from May 1, 2012, to June 30, 2018, overseeing the successful implementation of a statewide information technology project, the Oregon eCourt system, obtained state funding to help replace unsafe county courthouses, and rebuilt Oregon’s court system after severe budget reductions in the 2009 recession. He is overseeing the renovation and seismic protection of the century-old Oregon Supreme Court building, which will be completed later this year.

Balmer, 70, grew up in Portland and lives there with his wife, Mary Louise McClintock. He has two married children and one new grandchild. He plans to serve as a senior judge.

Contact: Todd Sprague
 503.986.5524