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Oregon Supreme Court Chief Justice Martha L. Walters Will Retire, Supreme Court Elects Justice Meagan A. Flynn as Next Chief Justice

Martha L. Walters, Oregon's first female Supreme Court Chief Justice, today announced that she will retire from the Oregon Supreme Court on December 31, 2022.

"I am grateful," Walters said. "Grateful for the opportunities I have had to study and decide the law, and grateful for the opportunities I have had to advocate for our courts and the cause of justice they serve. Oregonians can be proud of their appellate and trial court judges and their professional staff members who strive, every day, to listen with attention; make decisions that are timely, fair, and equitable; and take steps to make the changes that are necessary to maintain public trust and confidence."

"Chief Justice Martha Walters has been an incredible advocate for Oregonians seeking access to justice, showing steadfast leadership as the first woman to serve as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court," said Governor Kate Brown. "She has been collaborative and fearless in helping to seek solutions to some of the state's most pressing and complex issues. I appreciate her dedicated service to Oregon, and wish her the very best."

Walters was appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court by Governor Ted Kulongoski in 2006, after 30 years of private practice in Eugene. Some of her more well-known cases were on behalf of small Oregon cities and their ratepayers in the bond default lawsuits brought against the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS); former Oregon State University softball coach Vickie Dugan in her claim that she had been wrongly fired for advocating for Title IX compliance; and Oregon golfer Casey Martin in his quest for reasonable accommodation to enable him to play professional golf.

Effective July 2018, Walters's colleagues on the Oregon Supreme Court unanimously elected her as Chief Justice. In that role, she spearheaded the Oregon courts' Strategic Campaign to improve services to Oregonians; engaged local circuit courts in department governance and decision-making; focused on behavioral health needs of people in Oregon's courts; and implemented major legislation reducing security release (bail). When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Walters led successful statewide efforts to keep the courts open and safe, coining her rallying cry, "Courts Can!" Most recently, she has been

working collaboratively to address Oregon's public defense crisis, to ensure that people who are constitutionally entitled to counsel have lawyers to represent them.

Walters, who will turn 72 this month, lives in Eugene with her husband, John VanLandingham, a legal aid lawyer who is an authority on housing issues. They have two adult children.

Replacing Walters as Chief Justice will be Justice Meagan A. Flynn, who is 55. Flynn was appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court in April 2017 by Governor Kate Brown, after serving on the Oregon Court of Appeals since November 2014. Before her judicial service, Justice Flynn practiced civil and appellate law at two Portland law firms and was active in the Oregon State Bar. She lives in Portland with her husband, who also is a lawyer. They have two adult children.

Chief Justice Walters had this to say about the unanimous election of Justice Flynn as her successor:

“I have worked closely with Justice Flynn for the past five years and am so impressed by her intellect and work ethic. She studies the law carefully and thoughtfully, and when I have asked for help on any Judicial Branch project, she has been an eager volunteer. Justice Flynn will make an extraordinary Chief Justice, because she is open to all views, knows how to reach consensus, and wants to keep our courts responsive and accessible. Justice Flynn is deeply committed to equity and justice for all.”

By statute, the seven Supreme Court justices elect the Chief Justice to a six-year term. The Chief Justice presides over the Supreme Court and assigns opinions to associate justices after oral arguments on cases. She also serves as the administrative head of the Judicial Department – the state court system consisting of 27 judicial districts across the state and three statewide courts, 200 trial and appellate judges, 1,720 FTE non-judge employees, and a biennial General Fund budget of \$600.6 million.

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