



OREGON SUPREME COURT ELECTS FIRST FEMALE CHIEF JUSTICE

**For Immediate Release
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The Honorable Martha Lee Walters has been elected as the 43rd Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court, the court announced today. Walters will be Oregon's first woman Chief Justice and will succeed Chief Justice Thomas A. Balmer. Balmer, who has served as Chief Justice since 2012, will remain on the court.

"Chief Justice Balmer has been an innovative leader and a tireless advocate for Oregon's courts and the people who rely on them to resolve disputes quickly and fairly," Walters said. "He oversaw the successful statewide implementation of the Oregon eCourt system, obtained state funding to replace unsafe courthouses, and provided the leadership to make Oregon courts more efficient, open, and fair."

Balmer said "Oregon's court system and judicial branch of government will be in great hands with Justice Walters. She will continue to face challenges keeping Oregon's courts open and accessible to all Oregonians, especially to children, families, and people needing the protection of the courts."

Walters, 67, has served on the Court since 2006. Prior to her service on the Court, she practiced law in Eugene, including as a partner in one of the first all-woman firms in the state, was active in the Lane County and Oregon State Bar, and volunteered with non-profits, drafting laws for states and helping children and people with disabilities.

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 to write after oral arguments on cases. She also serves as the administrative head of the Judicial Department – the state court system consisting of 194 trial and appellate judges, 1,584 non-judge employees, and a biennial General Fund budget of \$454.5 million.

A photo and biography of Chief Justice-elect Walters are attached.

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Contact: Phil Lemman, 503.986.5745 (o), 503.580.7365 (c), or Phillip.Lemman@ojd.state.or.us

Hon. Martha L. Walters

Martha Lee Walters will begin serving as Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court on July 1, 2018.

She has been a member of that court since 2006, and during that time has served as Co-Chair of the Oregon Tribal Court/State Court Forum and as the court's representative to the Oregon Law Commission, the Oregon State Bar's Disciplinary System Review Committee, and the Russian-American Rule of Law Consortium, traveling to Sakhalin Island and Vladivostok to speak with judges about the American legal system.

Between 1977, when she graduated from law school, and her appointment to the Oregon Supreme Court in 2006, Justice Walters practiced law in Eugene, where she was a partner in a number of private law firms, including Walters Romm & Chanti, PC (1992-1995), one of the first all-woman law firms in Oregon. Walters represented individuals and businesses in employment and civil rights litigation and tried cases in state and federal courts. She also provided legal advice to individuals, businesses, and cities on a variety of matters, including employment, municipal and family law. One of Walters's best known cases was for a professional golfer who, because of a disability, required accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Justice Walters continues to serve as an Oregon Commissioner to the Uniform Law Commission (ULC), which drafts laws for enactment by the states. Walters was the first woman President of the ULC (2007-2009). During her tenure, the ULC drafted a state law to respond to difficulties that health care practitioners faced when they went to Louisiana to assist the victims of Hurricane Katrina. That act allows medical volunteers to provide emergency health care without having to obtain a license in the state where the disaster strikes.

Justice Walters has been elected to a number of law-related boards, including the American College of Trial Lawyers (since 1999), the American Law Institute (since 2004), and the Lane County Bar Association (President, 1992-1993). She also serves as a member of the International Advisory Committee for Mobility International USA, as a coach of the Salem-Keizer Coalition Mock Trial Team for the Classroom Law Project (since 2012), and served as a member of the Board of Directors for Direction Service, a Eugene nonprofit helping people with disabilities (1998-2006)

Justice Walters is a graduate of the University of Michigan (BA 1972, with distinction) and the University of Oregon School of Law (JD 1977, Order of the Coif). She is married to John H. VanLandingham, a Eugene legal-aid lawyer and housing advocate, and they have two adult children.

