



Supreme Court Justice Mary Jane Theis has dedicated her professional life to service as a Judge, and to a simple but critical cause: working to ensure that people are heard and treated fairly, in our courtrooms and in our justice system. Her twenty-eight years as a Judge have earned her universal praise, and the high honors and awards she has received have made her one of the most respected judges in the State of Illinois.

The only child of Eleanore and Kenneth Wendt, Mary Jane was born and raised in Chicago. Her father was an Illinois State Representative and later a Judge, and helped fight some of our State's leading civil rights battles of the day. Witnessing her father speak on the floor of the State House as he battled for social justice, and then witnessing him in his courtroom treating each person with dignity and respect, taught Justice Theis the value of public service and pursuing justice.

Mary Jane received her Bachelor's degree from Loyola University in 1971, and her law degree from The University of San Francisco School of Law in 1974. From 1974-83, she began her career as an Assistant Public Defender in Cook County where she represented people who had no one to speak for them.

Justice Theis has served at every level of the Judiciary in the State of Illinois. In 1983, she was appointed an Associate Judge in Cook County, where she served for five years. In 1988, she was elected to the Circuit Court, where she was assigned to the Criminal and Chancery Divisions. In her five years in the Criminal Court, she presided over hundreds of trials, involving charges such as murder, robbery, sexual assault and other serious felonies. In the Chancery Court, she heard civil cases from mortgage foreclosures to class actions and other multi-million dollar lawsuits.

Justice Theis served for 17 years on the Appellate Court, serving as a Presiding Judge for several terms. She chaired both the Committee on Judicial Education and the Committee on Judicial Conduct, and also served on the Supreme Court Rules Committee. Justice Theis has been President of the Appellate Lawyers Association and the Illinois Judges Association, and was a founding member and the first President of the Illinois Judges Foundation, the charitable arm of the Judges Association. She has also been a member of the Board of Governors of the Illinois State Bar Association and the Board of Managers of the Chicago Bar Association, and is a member of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois.

When Chief Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald retired from the Illinois Supreme Court in 2010, the Court appointed Justice Theis to fill his vacancy.

Mary Jane has taught numerous judicial education programs, and has lectured at conferences, seminars, and law schools, including Loyola University School of Law, Northwestern University School of Law, and the John Marshall Law School. She has received various prestigious awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Illinois Judges Association, Catholic Lawyer of the Year from the Catholic Lawyers Guild, Celtic Lawyer of the Year from the Celtic Lawyers Society of Chicago, the Mary Heftel Hooton Award from the Women's Bar Association of Illinois, and the Access to Justice Award from the Illinois State Bar Association. These awards, along with her tireless pursuit of justice, have earned her high praise throughout her long career. She has consistently received the highest ratings from Bar groups, the media, and those who appear before her.

Justice Theis has been married to her husband John for 40 years. They have two children, Jack Theis and Claire Merok, as well as four grandchildren.

www.TheisForJustice.com