

Governor Phil Murphy

Statement from Governor Murphy on the Passing of Former New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Alan Handler

05/24/2024

"Tammy and I are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of former New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Alan Handler at the age of 92. Justice Handler was a giant in New Jersey law. During his tenure as a Justice from 1977 to 1999, Justice Handler was regarded as one of the Court's intellectual leaders who helped drive the Wilentz Court to national prominence. One of the most notable of his nearly 500 opinions was his majority opinion in *Abbott v. Burke*, which launched a sea change in the distribution of school funding that continues to this day. Apart from his brilliance, Justice Handler was beloved by his colleagues for his sense of humor, curiosity, and tenacity.

"Yet even before Justice Handler's time on the Court, his contributions to public life in New Jersey were enormous. Born in Newark, he graduated from Princeton University and Harvard Law School. After starting his career in private practice, he joined the Office of the Attorney General, rising to the position of First Assistant Attorney General before being appointed to the Superior Court in 1968. Justice Handler was promoted to the Appellate Division in 1973, where he left a lasting legacy that included being one of the judges who ruled that girls must be allowed to play Little League baseball. Justice Handler resigned from the bench in 1976 to serve as Governor Byrne's chief counsel, before his ascension to the New Jersey Supreme Court a year later.

"Justice Handler was essential in transforming New Jersey's judiciary into the envy of the nation. His service made our state a fairer and more just place for all of our residents. We extend our deepest condolences to his daughters Nancy, Carolyn, and Julia, his stepchildren Kara and Sean, and his many nieces and nephews, and we will forever be grateful for his extraordinary life."

Governor Phil Murphy

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