

Governor Phil Murphy




photo: view of NJ Trenton DOM

Governor Murphy Announces Intention to Nominate John Hoffman to Serve on the New Jersey Supreme Court

06/10/2024

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery


Good afternoon, everyone.

Today, alongside members of leadership in the State Senate, I am honored to announce my fifth nomination to the New Jersey Supreme Court.  (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Barring any unexpected events, this will be the last Supreme Court pick of my administration.




(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

And it is fitting that I make this final announcement from the Governor's Outer Office, which is adorned with the portraits of many of our great predecessors.  (<https://www.nj.gov/office-of-the-governor/njgovernorsoffice>)

Their presence here reminds us that our legacies live on well after our time in office.



(<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

And one important aspect – of any New Jersey Governor's legacy – is how well they preserved our judiciary, which is one of the crown jewels of our great state and is so vital to maintaining the people's trust in the Rule of Law.  (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

As each of the Governors in this room would likely tell you, maintaining the integrity and independence of our state's judiciary means, at times, making difficult decisions.

In 1986, Governor Kean decided to re-nominate Chief Justice Robert Wilentz, who had been the subject of much ideological criticism from the right.

But nonetheless, Governor Kean recognized that Chief Justice Wilentz had served with honor and integrity, and thus, deserved to be re-nominated. After a hard-fought battle in the Senate, Governor Kean was able to win the 21 votes necessary for Chief Justice Wilentz's reappointment.

Acts of political courage, like this one, have helped ensure that our Court remains a national model for states across the country. And it is a story that provides a welcome contrast to other judicial bodies in these hyper-divided times.

Like his six colleagues, Justice Lee Solomon has honorably served our State for decades.

As someone who had served as a member of the General Assembly, a member of Governor Christie's cabinet, and a lower court judge, he brought a wealth of experience – from across all of state government – when he was appointed to the New Jersey Supreme Court in 2014.

And for the last ten years, all of New Jersey has benefited from his wisdom and perspectives.

This upcoming August, Justice Solomon will reach the mandatory retirement age of 70.

And, on behalf of all of New Jersey, I want to thank him for his dedicated service – and wish him the very best in his next chapter.

To fill his shoes, and to maintain the current partisan balance on our Court, I am pleased to announce that I will be nominating John Hoffman to be an Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court.

As many will attest, John is already a pillar of New Jersey's legal community.

Like Justice Solomon, he has devoted almost the entirety of his career to public service.

After graduating from Colgate University and Duke Law School, John joined the U.S. Department of Justice in 1996 as a trial attorney in the Civil Division.

In 2004, he joined the U.S. Attorney's Office, right here in Trenton, to protect the people of New Jersey as a prosecutor of both violent and white-collar crime.

In 2010, he moved to the State Comptroller's Office to serve as their Director of Investigations.

Two years later, he went on to the Department of Law and Public Safety to assume the post of Executive Assistant Attorney General.

And following the appointment of Attorney General Chiesa – who is with us today – to the United States Senate, in 2013, Governor Christie selected John to serve as Acting Attorney General – on this very day, exactly 11 years ago.

John would go on to discharge the duties of Attorney General for nearly three years, longer than any other Attorney General during the Christie administration.

And under his leadership, the Department of Law and Public Safety combated the opioid crisis, reformed procedures for investigating officer-involved shootings, and mandated the use of body-worn cameras by the State Police.

Additionally, John also worked to build new bonds of trust among law enforcement and communities of faith. In recognition of this commitment, in 2016, he received both the Jewish Community Service Award and the American Muslim Union Award.

After leaving the Christie administration, John was appointed as General Counsel at Rutgers, where he provides legal advice and counsel to the leadership of our State's flagship university.

And over the last few years, he has grappled with the same challenges facing institutions of higher education across the nation, including a once-in-a-century pandemic and debates surrounding the freedom of speech on college campuses.

John's career of service to New Jersey, while remarkable, is not entirely surprising given his upbringing.



He was born in New Brunswick and raised in Middlesex County, where his father, John A. Hoffman, is the legendary senior partner at Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, having practiced law there for over 60 years.

John's late mother, Judith Hoffman, was also a fixture of the Middlesex County community, serving as a nurse as well as an active volunteer in efforts to save lives from cancer and multiple sclerosis.

Growing up in the Wilentz family changed John's life in more ways than one.

At the firm, John's father practiced law with Stuart Cox for half a century. And over time, the two of them — along with their wives, who are, oddly enough, both named Judith — became close friends.


A little over two decades ago, they decided to set their kids up on a blind date.


Well, fast forward to today and John and Mary Jude Cox, who is Stuart and Judith's daughter, are now happily married.


Mary Jude, for her part, is an accomplished ophthalmologist and a glaucoma specialist in Voorhees.


Together, she and John have two children: Johnny, age 13, and Maggie, age 10.


And Johnny is a rather extraordinary 13-year-old. On Christmas Eve 2021, he was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia.

Thankfully, he is now in remission, and has even started his very own foundation to donate blankets to kids in the hospital during the holidays.  <https://twitter.com/PhilMurphy>

And what an amazing testament it is to the values that were instilled in both you, and your sister Maggie, from a young age, the very same values that John Hoffman will now bring to the New Jersey Supreme Court.  <https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate John, along with the entire Hoffman family, who is with us today on this momentous day.  <https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>

Congratulations to you all — and thank you for being with us.  <https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>

Now, of course — it is no secret that, right now, we are in the midst of yet another divisive national election year.  <https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>

And at times like these, it is all the more important that — here in New Jersey — we continue to put the integrity of our prized judiciary beyond the reach of partisan politics.

In that spirit, I am deeply grateful for the leadership of Senate President Nick Scutari, who is with us today, and Senate Minority Leader Tony Bucco.

I thank them for their support of John's nomination, and I look forward to working with the two of them — along with Senate Judiciary Chairman Brian Stack and all of their colleagues — to see John confirmed before the start of the Court's fall term.

And when the members of the Court take their seats in September, I know they will continue to serve our State, with honor, for many years to come.

It is now my pleasure to invite my partner in government, Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, to say a few words.

Governor Phil Murphy

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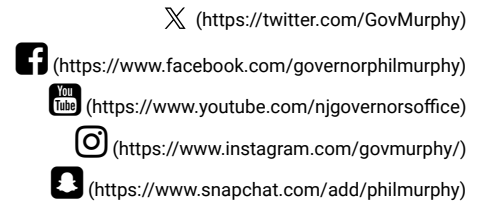
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
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