

Washington Courts: News and Information

Public memorial service for former Chief Justice Vernon Pearson set for May 2 in Olympia

April 29, 2013

A public memorial service for former Chief Justice of the Washington Supreme Court Vernon R. Pearson will be held at 9 a.m. Thursday, May 2 at the Temple of Justice on the Capitol Campus in Olympia. Justice Pearson served on the Supreme Court from 1982 – 1989. He died Feb. 4, 2013 at the age of 89 from complications following hip surgery.

Speakers at the memorial service will include Washington Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Madsen, Justice Mary Fairhurst, retired Justices Robert Utter and Gerry Alexander, Chief Justice Anita Dupris of the Colville Tribal Court of Appeals and Quinault Tribal President Fawn Sharp. A reception will follow the memorial service.

Pearson was among the first judges to take the bench of the Washington State Court of Appeals, Division II, when it was created in 1969. He was appointed to the Supreme Court by Governor John Spellman. He became interested in the law after enlisting in the Navy following the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, when he served as his ship's prosecuting attorney. He served in private practice in Tacoma for 17 years before becoming a judge. Throughout his career he worked to ensure tribal courts were given the respect and acknowledgement they were due; he was instrumental in instituting a court rule that tribal court judgments "will be given full faith and credit" in Washington courts.

Justice Pearson is survived by his brother, Claude, an attorney, and his children Kathy, Robert, Stephen and David.

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