

APPENDIX

HONORABLE ROBERT J. CALLAHAN
1930–2013

Chief Justice Robert J. Callahan, a lifelong resident of Norwalk, Connecticut, who had a distinguished forty-one year career in the Connecticut judiciary, passed away on January 1, 2013, at the age of eighty-two.

Justice Callahan was born on June 3, 1930, in Norwalk, where he became a standout all-around athlete. He graduated from Norwalk High School in 1948, excelling in football, basketball and baseball. He attended Boston College on a football scholarship and received his B.S. degree in 1952. Thereafter, he was recruited by the Chicago Bears of the National Football League and played during their exhibition season. Subsequently, he returned to Norwalk and attended Fordham University Law School where he received his J.D. degree in 1955. He was admitted to the Connecticut Bar that same year and opened a law practice with his brother, Eugene Callahan, and his lifelong friend, Thomas Flaherty.

Justice Callahan began his career as a prosecuting attorney for the Norwalk City Court from 1959–61, and was an assistant prosecutor for the Circuit Court from 1965–68. He also was a member of the Norwalk Common Council from 1955–56 and from 1969–70, and served his country in the United States Army from 1956–58.

In 1970, then Governor John Dempsey nominated him to the trial bench as a judge of the Circuit Court, and he was then appointed as a judge of the Court of Common Pleas from 1974–76. Judge Callahan was later nominated to the Superior Court in 1976 by then Governor Ella T. Grasso, and he served in that position until 1985. He received the high honor of being appointed as an Associate Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court in 1985 by then Governor William O’Neil. In 1996, Justice Callahan was sworn in as the thirty-fourth Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court by then Governor John Rowland. He held that position until he retired in 1999, when he assumed senior status and heard oral arguments on a part-time basis. Thereafter, Judge Callahan returned to the Superior Court bench as a judge trial referee, where he presided over several serious criminal cases and served as an exceptional mediator.

Blessed with intellectual honesty and the ability to cut through the legalism and get right to the heart of the case,

Justice Callahan was admired by attorneys and judges alike for his integrity, patience, and unfailing good humor. In his three years as Chief Justice, he tirelessly and effectively endeavored to oversee initiatives that prepared the Judicial Branch to meet the challenges of the next millennium. Several of those initiatives included the creation of the Client Security Fund Committee, the establishment of the Commission on Public Trust and Confidence in the Courts, the establishment of a Judicial Community Outreach Program, the expansion of court interpreter services, the development of court information desks, and a renewed emphasis on customer service. Additionally, Justice Callahan oversaw the merger of the Bail Commission, Office of Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation, Division of Juvenile Detention, Family Services Division, and the Office of Alternative Sanctions into a single Court Support Services Division.

Justice Callahan will be remembered for his measured reasoning and respect for the process in reaching judicial decisions. During his tenure as a justice on the Supreme Court, Justice Callahan authored 357 majority opinions, 44 dissenting opinions, and 12 concurring opinions.

The legacy of Justice Callahan was summed up by current Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers in the following statement: “We have lost one of the greatest judges this state has ever had. He was a hardworking, diligent judge who did not think of cases as ‘big’ or ‘small.’ What mattered most to him is that the case was important to the parties. This is a philosophy that he embodied and one that he passed along to countless judges who had the pleasure of working with him throughout the years. Justice Callahan was a consummate gentleman who was patient and a good listener. He was truly beloved by everyone with whom he worked and many people sought him out for his counsel and wisdom. It is worth noting that he had a wonderful sense of humor and an unsurpassed ability of helping to put things into perspective.”

Governor Dannel P. Malloy released the following statement on the passing of the Honorable Robert J. Callahan: “Chief Justice Callahan made a lasting impact in Connecticut, serving nearly fifteen years on the Supreme Court and authoring hundreds of opinions that have had a profound impact on the laws of our state. Through my own experience both as an attorney and in public service, I’ve witnessed firsthand his dedication, integrity, and intellect. His leadership skills and humor guided the court through several

difficult cases, always with honest reasoning and judgment. My condolences go out to his family, friends and colleagues in the judicial branch.”

Justice Callahan, a devoted family man, was survived by his wife of fifty-three years, Dorothy Trudel Callahan, their eight children, Shelia, Kerry, Denise, Janine, Patrick, Jane, Megan, and Robert, as well as twenty-one grandchildren.

Although called by many appellations, Justice Callahan’s most cherished titles were “Dad” and “Grandpa.” He delighted in his family and the achievements of his offspring. He loved boisterous and hectic family gatherings, the hug of a grandchild, or a quiet evening at home with Dorothy. Justice Callahan left a lasting mark on his family, his beloved home town of Norwalk, and Connecticut jurisprudence. His wise and articulate decisions will endure; yet, his greater legacies are the love of his large family and the admiration of all who knew him as a devoted husband, selfless father and grandfather, and faithful friend.
