



THE HONORABLE BERNICE B. DONALD was nominated to the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit by President Barack Hussein Obama on December 1, 2010 and re-nominated in January 2011. She was confirmed 96-2 by the Senate on September 6, 2011. Prior to joining the Court of Appeals, Judge Donald served on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, where she was appointed by President William Jefferson Clinton in December 1995. Judge Donald served as Judge of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Tennessee from June 1988 to January 1996. She was the first African American women in the history of the United States to serve as a bankruptcy judge. In 1982, she was elected to the General Sessions Criminal Court becoming the first African American woman to serve as a judge in the history of the State of Tennessee.

Judge Donald received her law degree from the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, where she later served as a member of the Alumni, Law Alumni, and University Foundation Boards of Directors and as an adjunct faculty member. She received a LLM from Duke University School of Law and an honorary Doctors in Law from Suffolk University. She frequently serves as faculty for the National Judicial College and the Federal Judicial Center (FJC), and she served as a member of the FJC's Board of Directors from 2003 through 2007. Judge Donald currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Appellate Judges Education Institute. For the past several years, Judge Donald has served as faculty for the National Trial Advocacy program at the University of Virginia. On October 22, 2018, Judge Donald delivered the distinguished James Madison Lecture at the New York University School of Law. She has served as a Jurist in Residence at the Universities of Cincinnati, Washington, American, and Georgia Schools of Law.

In 1996, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist appointed Judge Donald to the Judicial Conference Advisory Committee on Bankruptcy Rules, where she served for six years. In 2011, Chief Justice John G. Roberts appointed her to an indefinite term on the Judicial Branch Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States. On October 1, 2019, Chief Justice Roberts again appointed Judge Donald to serve on the Advisory Committee on Bankruptcy Rules, where she serves as Liaison to the Advisory Committee on Appellate Rules.

An internationally recognized legal scholar, Judge Donald has lectured and trained judges around the world for many years. Judge Donald has served as faculty for numerous international programs, including Romania, Mexico, Turkey, Brazil, Bosnia, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Senegal, Rwanda, Tanzania, Russia, Egypt, Morocco, Thailand, Uganda, Kenya, Cambodia, Vietnam, The Philippines, and Armenia. In 2003, Judge Donald led a People to People delegation to Johannesburg, and Cape Town, South African and traveled to Zimbabwe to monitor the trial of a judge accused of judicial misconduct.

Judge Donald is an active and dedicated member to both the American Bar Association and the National Bar Association. She currently serves as the Chair of the National Bar Association's Judicial Council Education Committee, and has received the Judicial Council's President and Chair Awards, along with other special service awards.

Judge Donald has served as President of the National Association of Women Judges and the Association of Women Attorneys.

In June 2005, Judge Donald co-founded 4-Life, a skills training and enrichment program for students

ages 6 to 15 designed to teach children to become positive productive citizens. In 2020, she was elected to serve as a member of the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine's working group on Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System.

Judge Donald has been the recipient of over 100 awards for professional, civic, and community activities, including the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Memphis, the Martin Luther King Community Service Award, and the Benjamin Hooks Award presented in 2002 by the Memphis Bar Foundation. In 2013, Judge Donald was elected to the Board of Directors of the American Judicature Society, and in August of 2013, she was featured in the Federal Lawyer Magazine. During the 2013 annual meeting of the National Bar Association, Judge Donald received the William H. Hastie Award. The Hastie Award is the Judicial Council's highest award and is presented to recognize excellence in legal and judicial scholarship and demonstrated commitment to justice under the law. In 2013, Judge Donald also received the Difference Makers Award from the Solo, Small Firm & General Practice Division of the ABA, and the Pioneer Award from her fellow classmates at East Side High. Judge Donald received the Justice William Brennan Award by the University of Virginia in January of 2014, and the Pickering Award from the Senior Lawyers Division of the ABA in August 2014. In 2017, Judge Donald received the prestigious Margaret Brent Award from the ABA Commission on Women for her service to the profession. Most recently, Judge Donald received the 2019 Pillars of Excellence Award, designed to recognize attorneys who have made significant contributions to the practice of law in their civic and professional lives.

In 2020, the American Bar Association Labor and Employment Law Section successfully petitioned the ABA Board of Governors to create the "Judge Bernice B. Donald Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Award." Judge Donald was the inaugural recipient.

Also in 2020, the ABA Tort Trial and Insurance Section presented Judge Donald with "The Lifetime Liberty Achievement Award."