

**Judge Vanessa Ruiz**  
**Senior Judge, District of Columbia Court of Appeals**

Hon. Vanessa Ruiz is a Senior Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, the highest court for the District of Columbia. Appointed by the President in 1994, she is the longest serving woman judge on the court.

Prior to her judicial appointment, Judge Ruiz was Corporation Counsel (now the Attorney General) for the District of Columbia and an attorney in private practice in Washington, DC. Early in her career, Judge Ruiz was one of few women to argue before the United States Supreme Court, successfully representing a fair housing organization in *Havens Realty Corp. v. Coleman*, 455 U.S. 363 (1982), a seminal case for organizational standing in federal court.

Judge Ruiz speaks nationally and internationally on access to justice, judicial independence and ethics and on the indispensable leadership role of women judges. She is the President of the international Association of Women Judges and a past President of the US National Association of Women Judges. Judge Ruiz is a member of the Advisory Board of the UN Global Judicial Integrity Network that has established a platform and training for judges on issues of judicial ethics and integrity. At the court, she chaired the Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct, charged with the revision and adoption of the Code of Judicial Conduct for the District of Columbia and advising judges on ethical issues. She is a Commissioner of the D.C. Access to Justice Commission and has sought to enhance access for vulnerable populations in the judicial system, including language minorities and those who lack legal representation. She led the effort of the American Bar Association that adopted national standards for language services in courts and at NAWJ developed a curriculum for judges to address obstacles for immigrants in courts. She is a member of the American Law Institute and served as trustee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Judge Ruiz was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico. She graduated from Wellesley College in 1972 with a BA in Philosophy and from Georgetown University Law Center in 1975; and in 2006 was awarded an honorary law degree by the Washington College of Law, American University. She served as adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Law Center and is co-author of "Europe Without Frontiers: A Lawyer's Guide" (BNA).

Judge Ruiz is married to David E. Birenbaum, a retired partner of Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson and former US Ambassador to the UN for Management and Reform.