

Press Release



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN
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Retired Winnebago County Judge Barbara Key receives 2025 State Bar Lifetime Jurist Award

MADISON, Wis. (April 21, 2025) -- Retired Winnebago County Judge Barbara Key's legacy is etched in both the courtroom and the fabric of Wisconsin's legal system. A leader in judicial education, she has been instrumental in shaping initiatives that enhance the fairness and effectiveness of the justice system. For her lasting contributions, she is being honored with the State Bar of Wisconsin's 2025 Lifetime Jurist Award

The Lifetime Jurist Award, granted by the State Bar of Wisconsin's Bench Bar Committee, honors judges who exemplify fairness, impartiality, high personal character, and long-term dedication to the justice system.

Key, who served as chief judge of the Fourth Judicial District from 2017 to 2022, was instrumental in advancing judicial education and professional development. She contributed to several Wisconsin Supreme Court committees, including those on judicial conduct, jury instructions, the bench book, and language translation. In addition, she served as associate dean of the Wisconsin Judicial College and held numerous leadership roles throughout her career.

"Judge Key spent a significant part of her judicial career enhancing the education and professionalism of her colleagues on the bench," the committee wrote in its nomination.

Elected to the bench in 1998, Judge Key also demonstrated a deep commitment to her community. She dedicated countless hours to organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Nova Counseling Services, Confront Addictions Now, Oshkosh Southwest Rotary Club, and Regional Domestic Abuse Services.

Key graduated from U.W.-Madison with a double major in journalism and political science.

Judge Key is available for interviews. To schedule, email Mike Wiltse, mwiltse@wisbar.org, or call 608-250-6025.



Retired Winnebago County Circuit Court Judge Barbara Key is the recipient of the State Bar of Wisconsin's 2025 Lifetime Jurist Award in recognition of her distinguished service, leadership in judicial education, and dedication to community causes. (Photo courtesy of Thompson Photo Imagery.)

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ABOUT THE BENCH BAR COMMITTEE

The Bench Bar Committee of the State Bar of Wisconsin fosters collaboration between lawyers and judges on issues and trends affecting the administration of justice. By promoting communication and collegial interaction, the committee strengthens cooperation and understanding between the bench and the bar.

ABOUT THE STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

The State Bar of Wisconsin is the integrated professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 25,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit wisbar.org.

PHOTO ATTACHED

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