

# Chief Justice Paul Newby Presents Professionalism Awards



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CONGRATULATIONS  
**CHIEF JUSTICE'S  
COMMISSION ON  
PROFESSIONALISM  
AWARD**  
2020 / 2021



## Chief Justice Paul Newby Presents Professionalism Awards

***Awards were presented April 20 at the joint reception and dinner of the North Carolina State Bar and the North Carolina Bar Association in Raleigh.***

RALEIGH — [Chief Justice Paul Newby](#) presented the 2020 and 2021 [Chief Justice's Professionalism Award](#) to six recipients on Wednesday, April 20, at the joint reception and dinner of the N.C. State Bar and the N.C. Bar Association at the Raleigh Marriott Crabtree Valley. The recipients were honored with this annual award for their dedication and commitment to the principles of professionalism and public service in North Carolina.

The awards were presented to the following:

- The Honorable J.C. Cole, superior court judge (Ret.)
- The Honorable Forrest D. Bridges, senior resident superior court judge
- Attorney Debra L. Foster
- Attorney James "Jimbo" S. Perry
- Attorney Richard S. Towers
- Attorney David B. Freeman (posthumously)

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## 2020 Recipients

**Judge J.C. Cole** retired in 2021 after serving a long and distinguished career on the district and superior court benches.

Cole was appointed to the district court by Governor James B. Hunt in 1994. He was later appointed to the superior court bench by Governor Beverly Perdue in 2009. He was elected to a full eight-year term in 2010 and re-elected in November 2018.

Cole earned his undergraduate degree from Livingstone College. He also received a masters degree in criminal justice from North Carolina Central University and his juris doctor from North Carolina Central University School of Law. He began his law career in private practice in Hertford.

During his time on the bench, Cole was known for his interest in the people who appeared before him. He especially encouraged young people to do better and be better for their own future well-being.

**Judge Forrest "Don" Bridges** is the senior resident superior court judge for District 27B (Cleveland and Lincoln counties). He was first elected to the Superior Court in 1994 after working in private practice for 17 years in Shelby. His areas of concentration in private practice included civil and criminal trials, bankruptcy and domestic relations. Bridges also served as counsel for the Cleveland County Sanitary District, a county-wide water system. While serving on the Superior Court, Bridges has served as president of the Conference of Superior Court Judges, as a member of the Education Committee, and as chair of the Pattern Jury Instruction Committee. One of his favorite volunteer activities as a judge has been working each year as a facilitator in the School for New Superior Court

Judges at the School of Government in Chapel Hill. Bridges also served on the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism in 2006-07.

Bridges received his legal education at Wake Forest University School of Law, graduating in 1977 and, prior to law school, attended the United States Air Force Academy and UNC-Charlotte. Bridges and his wife have been married for 38 years. Their family includes three adult children and two grandchildren.

**Debra L. Foster** is an attorney in Charlotte who represents clients throughout North Carolina, focusing on matters of estate planning, estate administration, and trusts and probate. Foster has more than 30 years of experience advising clients and assisting them in the development of effective estate planning strategies. Foster has compassion for every client and recognizes the need to understand each client's individual situation and concerns.

Foster is a Fellow in the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel and a North Carolina State Bar Board Certified Specialist in Estate Planning and Probate Law.

She is a former Chair of the Estate Planning and Fiduciary Law Section of the North Carolina Bar Association and a former Chair of the Estate Planning and Probate Law Specialization Committee of the North Carolina State Bar.

Recognized consistently as one of Business North Carolina's Legal Elite (2002-2017), Foster was voted by her colleagues throughout North Carolina as the top estate planning attorney in North Carolina in 2017. Additionally, Foster has been designated as a North Carolina SuperLawyer (2005-2017), where she consistently ranks among the top 50 female attorneys in any field of law in North Carolina, and as one of the Best Lawyers in America (2007-2017).

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## 2021 Recipients

**James "Jimbo" S. Perry** is an attorney with Perry, Perry, & Perry in Kinston. Perry studied at the University of North Carolina School of Law where he graduated in 1980. Immediately after graduation, he moved back to his hometown of Kinston to work with his father, mother, sister, and uncle in private practice from 1980-1981, then transitioned into the role of assistant United States attorney in the United States Attorney's Office in Raleigh until 1985. From there, Perry moved back to Kinston and founded the firm Perry, Perry, & Perry where he continues to work today.

Perry has devoted his life to his family and service to his community through church, local schools, youth sports, and local jail facilities. Other service includes working with the Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Club, Little by Little, Refuge Camp for Children, Hope Restoration, Flynn Recovery Home, and Eastern NC Inn of Court.

Perry is a member of the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism and is the recipient of the Citizen Lawyer Award, John B. McMillan Distinguished Service Award, Tommy Jarrett Service Award, QC Honors Recognition, and Southern Star Recognition.

**Richard S. Towers** is an attorney whose career expands for decades having been in private practice since 1976. Prior to being in private practice, Towers was

the first full-time public defender in High Point. In 2018, he was recognized for 50 years of service by the N.C. State Bar.

Towers graduated from Monmouth University (New Jersey) and received his juris doctorate from Wake Forest University School of Law. He also served in the United States Marine Corps as a JAG Officer.

**David B. Freedman** was an accomplished and respected attorney, having represented clients in a range of areas including civil, criminal, and professional-practice proceedings during his 40-year tenure in the practice of law. He passed away on September 3, 2021, due to complications from COVID-19.

Freedman was one of North Carolina's most accomplished and respected attorneys. He built his career on delivering extraordinary service to clients in civil, criminal and professional-practice proceedings. He believed that every case was important and that every client deserved an attorney who represented them with zeal, knowledge, and experience.

Freedman received his undergraduate degree in 1979 and his J.D. in 1982 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He was a certified as a specialist in criminal law in State and Federal practice. He served as president of the Forsyth County Bar Association and as chairman of the Criminal Law Section of the N.C. Academy of Trial Lawyers. He was listed in The Best Lawyers in America both in white collar and non-white collar criminal law and in 2012 was named the publication's Lawyer of the Year for criminal defense white-collar and in 2013 the Lawyer of the Year for criminal defense non-white collar. Freedman was listed in The Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers, published by Martindale-Hubbell. In 2006, he was named by Business North Carolina as the state's top criminal defense lawyer and is listed in the magazine's Legal Elite Hall of Fame. He has been listed in Super Lawyers of North Carolina since 2006.

Freedman taught criminal procedure and trial practice at Wake Forest University School of Law for 15 years and also lectured at Harvard Law School.

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### **ABOUT THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S COMMISSION ON PROFESSIONALISM**

The primary charge of the [Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism \(CJCP\)](#), chaired by Chief Justice Paul Newby, is to enhance professionalism among North Carolina judges, lawyers and law students. In carrying out this charge, the CJCP is responsible for providing ongoing attention and assistance through a variety of programs, projects, and publications, in order to ensure that the practice of law remains a high calling that is dedicated to the service of clients and the public good.

For information about the Chief Justice's Professionalism Award or the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, please contact the Commission office at 919-890-1455.

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### About North Carolina Judicial Branch

The [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#) is an equal and distinctively separate branch and core function of government. More than 7,000 Judicial Branch employees statewide administer justice in courthouses in North Carolina's 100 counties. The [Judicial Branch budget for FY 2020–21](#) was \$598.2M, 89.2% of which is used to pay salaries and the remaining 10.8% is used for operations. The Judicial Branch receives only 2.44% of the overall State budget.

### About North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) is the administrative agency for the [North Carolina Judicial Branch](#), providing administrative services to help the North Carolina court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs, caseloads, and available resources.

### Media Contact

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