

Honorable Judith S. Kaye Bio



Judith S. Kaye joined Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP as Of Counsel in 2009, and focuses her practice on litigation and arbitration. Before joining the firm, she served as Chief Judge of the State of New York and Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of the State of New York for 15 years, until December 31, 2008 (the date of mandatory retirement at age 70). She was appointed to the Court of Appeals in September 1983, by Governor Mario Cuomo, becoming the first woman ever to serve on New York State's top court.

She gained a national reputation for both her groundbreaking decisions and her innovative reforms of the New York court system. Over the 25 years she served on the Court of Appeals, she wrote notable decisions on a wide variety of statutory, constitutional and common law issues, ranging from contract and commercial law, to rights for same-sex couples and the death penalty. She also left her mark on New York's courts as a creative reformer, streamlining New York's jury system and establishing a first-rate Commercial Division as well as specialized courts to focus on issues such as drug addiction, domestic violence and mental health issues. In addition, she created the Adoption Now program that produced more effective procedures for children in foster care and their families. Before her appointment to the bench, she practiced law at Sullivan & Cromwell, IBM and Olwine, Connelly, Chase, O'Donnell & Weyher, where she became that firm's first female partner. She is a 1958 graduate of Barnard College, a 1962 graduate of New York University School of Law (*cum laude*), and holds 30 honorary degrees from law schools, colleges and universities.

She is the author of well over 200 published articles on legal process, state constitutional law, women in law, juvenile justice, professional ethics and problem-solving courts. She frequently speaks on these topics, as well as those that pertain to international arbitration. She has served as an arbitrator or panel chair in a broad spectrum of international and U.S. commercial disputes.

Judge Kaye has received numerous awards recognizing her judicial and scholarly accomplishments, such as the New York State Bar Association's Distinction in International Affairs Award, the New York State Bar Association's Gold Medal, the American Bar Association Justice Center's John Marshall Award, the National Center for State Courts' William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession's Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, The American Lawyer's Lifetime Achievement Award, the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Adoption Excellence Award, the New York Law Journal's Lifetime Achievement Award and the New York University School of Law's Judge Edward Weinfeld Award. In 2014, she was selected by Harvard Law School as an honoree for its inaugural International Women's Day Exhibition.