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Former Chief Justice Charles McDevitt Dies at 89

Former Idaho Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles F. McDevitt has died. He was 89.

McDevitt, of Boise, passed away Saturday at a local care facility, surrounded by family. He will be buried in a private family ceremony at his request.

Former Gov. Cecil Andrus appointed McDevitt to the Supreme Court in 1989. He remained on the Court through 1997, becoming chief justice in 1993.

McDevitt led the Court as it launched Idaho's statewide court assistance offices and authorized modern approaches to mediation for family courts and civil litigation. The Idaho Tribal State Court Forum, which allows members of Idaho's Judicial Branch and five tribal courts to collaborate on important issues, also began during his leadership tenure. As chief justice he emphasized the Court's role in administering the Judicial Branch, including changes to accounting and technology.

"I will remember Chief Justice McDevitt for his leadership, promoting innovative changes to the courts that still benefit Idahoans today," said former Justice Cathy Silak, who served on the Court with McDevitt.

McDevitt's time as a justice followed a career as a lawyer, businessman and legislator. Among other jobs, he worked for several corporations, including as general counsel for Boise Cascade Corp. in the 1960s and an executive vice president for New York-based Singer Co. in the 1970s. He represented Ada County in the Idaho House for two terms, helping to author the state's sales tax system, then used his legislative experience in 1967 as a member of the Idaho State Bar advancing proposed Judicial Branch reforms.

He was a founding partner in two Boise law firms: Givens, McDevitt, Pursley & Webb; and after serving on the Court, McDevitt & Miller.

Born in Pocatello, McDevitt was married with seven children. In civic life he served on a number of community boards and committees, especially those focused on parks, the outdoors and youth activities. His name adorns the Charles F. McDevitt Youth Sports Complex in Boise.

McDevitt graduated from the University of Idaho College of Law and was admitted to the Bar in 1956. The Bar honored him in 2012 as a distinguished lawyer, in the process compiling much of the biographical information referenced here.

A photo of former Chief Justice McDevitt is available upon request.

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