

## Supreme Court of Florida

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Contact: Craig Waters (850) 414-7641

Florida Supreme Court Press Office

### **Justice James E.C. Perry Announces His Retirement from the Florida Supreme Court**

TALLAHASSEE – Justice James E.C. Perry has notified Gov. Rick Scott that he will retire from the Florida Supreme Court on Dec. 30, 2016.

“After over sixteen years of proudly serving the citizens of the State of Florida, first as a circuit judge and currently as a Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, I am constitutionally mandated to retire by the end of my current term,” Perry wrote Scott in a letter delivered to the governor’s office Friday afternoon.

Gov. Jeb Bush appointed Perry a trial judge in the state’s 18th judicial circuit, which includes Seminole and Brevard counties, in March 2000. Gov. Charlie Crist appointed Perry to the state’s high court in March 2009.

Florida’s 85th justice, Perry is the fourth African-American to serve on the Florida Supreme Court. He grew up in the segregated South and decided to become a lawyer the night the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968.

Perry had never even met a lawyer. But that evening he knew he wanted “to be an instrument of change, to make a difference.”

He had a chance to put that philosophy into action not long after graduating from Columbia Law School in 1972 and returning to the South, where he was hired by the Georgia Indigent Legal Services and sat for his bar exam.

At the time, Georgia had 38 black attorneys in the state. The state generally passed three black applicants a year – a graduate of the University of Georgia, a graduate of Emory University and one other graduate.

Perry and 49 other black applicants took Georgia's bar exam in June 1972. None of them passed. Perry, who had passed the multi-state exam but not the Georgia Bar, decided to sue the Georgia Board of Bar Examiners. Sixteen other applicants joined him in the federal lawsuit, which alleged violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as well as due process and equal protection.

While *James E.C. Perry et al. v Edward S. Sell, Jr., et al.* was still in litigation, the February 1973 Georgia bar exam was administered. Perry and 23 other black applicants passed the exam. A few months later, another 24 black applicants passed the exam. In a very short time, the number of black attorneys in Georgia more than doubled.

But Perry soon moved on to Florida, where he began working with the Seminole Employment and Economic Development Corp. in Sanford. He passed the Florida Bar Exam in 1975 and went into private practice, specializing in civil and business law as a senior partner in Perry & Hicks, P.A.

Perry's appointment to the trial bench in central Florida in 2000 made him the first African-American judge in Florida's 18th judicial circuit. The judges of the circuit elected him to serve as chief judge of the circuit for a two-year term beginning in July 2003

When he applied for an opening on the Florida Supreme Court nine years later, Perry wrote that his legal career had been more rewarding and fulfilling than he could have imagined and that his commitment to the fundamental principles of the rule of law was stronger than ever.

"The United States legal system, though flawed, is arguably the best in the world and I am proud to be one of its humble servants," he wrote.

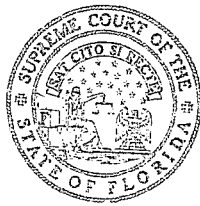
Perry's family includes his wife, Adrienne M. Perry, and three grown children, two of whom are lawyers.

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For more information:

- Justice Perry: [www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/perry.shtml](http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/perry.shtml)
- Mandatory retirement: [floridasupremecourt.org/justices/merit.shtml#Mandatory](http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/merit.shtml#Mandatory)
- Appointment (merit retention): [www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/merit.shtml](http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/merit.shtml)
- High-resolution photo: <http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/justices/perry-2015-large.jpg>

Justice Perry's letter to Governor Scott is attached.



# Supreme Court of Florida

500 South Duval Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1925

JORGE LABARGA  
CHIEF JUSTICE  
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JUSTICES

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CLERK OF COURT

SILVESTER DAWSON  
MARSHAL

September 9, 2016

BY HAND DELIVERY

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor of the State of Florida  
The Capitol, 400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

After over sixteen years of proudly serving the citizens of the State of Florida, first as a circuit judge and currently as a Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, I am constitutionally mandated to retire by the end of my current term. My official retirement date will be December 30, 2016.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James E.C. Perry".

James E.C. Perry

JECP/ps

cc: The Honorable Jorge Labarga