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Justice Debra Todd Formally Installed as First Female Chief Justice in History of Pa Supreme Court

HARRISBURG – Surrounded by family, friends and colleagues, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Debra Todd today made history as she was formally sworn-in as Pennsylvania’s 58th Chief Justice, becoming the first woman installed as chief in the Court’s 300-year history.

“Today my heart is full of joy and gratitude,” said Chief Justice Debra Todd. Joy in arriving at this moment and gratitude for all the strong and determined women who paved the way and for those who supported me throughout my journey.

“It means the world to me to take the oath like so many distinguished jurists before me, while forging new ground for women and reaffirming my commitment to support, obey and defend the Constitution of the United States and of this commonwealth,” said Todd. “My path to this point has been guided by a belief which was instilled in me at an early age, that with hard work and dedication, little girls could achieve anything.”

“Today I share this historic moment with all Pennsylvanians, especially our children whose hopes and dreams will shape the future and make the world a place where nothing is out of reach.

“I realize I’m the first female chief justice, but I know I won’t be the last.”

The daughter of a steelworker and homemaker, Todd was born and raised in Elwood City, Lawrence County and at an early age developed a dream of becoming a lawyer after working as a filing clerk for a local private attorney. Reflecting on the earliest days of her career, Todd fondly recalls being fascinated by the legal process and inspired when her employer encouraged her to become a lawyer.

“It was at that moment that a light went on for me and it never went out,” said Todd.

Todd would go on to attend then Chatham College, earning her undergraduate degree with honors in political science and theater, moving on to the University of Pittsburgh School of Law where she was a member of the Law Review, and finally earning her LL.M. degree in the Judicial Process from the University of Virginia School of Law.

Upon graduation, she began her career as an in-house litigation attorney for U.S. Steel Corporation before maintaining a trial practice in the City of Pittsburgh with an emphasis in complex civil litigation.

According to Chief Justice Todd, her path to the bench from private practice was “exciting and challenging.

“As a proponent of the legal process, I naturally started looking for the next step – to take my love of the law to the next level,” Todd said.

After serving as a Judge on the Superior Court of Pennsylvania from 2000 through 2007, Chief Justice Todd was elected to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in Nov. 2007 and was retained in November 2017 for a second ten-year term.

“I am proud of this Court – of the work that we do and the commitment that we share to apply the law, honor the constitution and simply remain focused on doing the right thing,” said Todd.

“Every case is of equal importance. While some may be more high profile than others, still others have greater consequences for people. We never lose sight of the impact that we have on the lives of all Pennsylvanians.”

As the highest Court in the commonwealth and the oldest appellate court in the nation, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is the definitive authority in enforcing Pennsylvania’s Constitution and laws. The Court supervises the entire court system to ensure that Pennsylvanians’ rights are protected and enforced through efficient judicial administration of the cases brought before them. More information about the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and Chief Justice Todd is available [here](#).

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