

Judge John C. Eldridge: Extraordinary jurist

Opinion

After nearly three decades, Judge John C. Eldridge retires from the **Court of Appeals** on November 13. We have written before in praise of this brilliant and extraordinary jurist but he is an inexhaustible subject.

In January 1999, on the occasion of his 25th anniversary on the court, we noted that Judge Eldridge was “[a] fierce defender of constitutional rights, a guardian of citizen access to the administrative process, and an advocate for the importance of state law in the scheme of federalism [and] the Court’s leader in such diverse fields as constitutional remedies, damages, administrative law, preemption, environmental law, standing, insurance law and the right to jury trial” and that “[l]ike the highly regarded jurist for whom he clerked, Judge Simon E. Sobeloff, he has displayed an incisive legal mind, a prodigious knowledge of the law and the ability to craft scholarly, yet readable and perceptive opinions.”

In June of this year, on the occasion of his receipt of the equivalent of a “lifetime achievement” award from the Administrative Law Section of the **Maryland State**

Bar Association, we wrote that “[f]or nearly three decades, the reasonable and progressive development of administrative law has been in the careful and capable hands of Court of Appeals Judge John C. Eldridge [and] [n]o one who practices in this area is or could be unacquainted with his vast array of opinions governing this important legal specialty.”

Perhaps the best and most recent assessment of Judge Eldridge’s contributions was authored by his colleague Judge Lynne A. Battaglia for the *Maryland Law Review*. There, Judge Battaglia said that “[l]ooking back over the hundreds of judicial opinions that Judge Eldridge has authored, what most distinguishes him from his colleagues is not his style of writing. He has not made his mark by wedding himself to a particular style of constitutional interpretation or to a specific ideology. What has made Judge Eldridge unique has been his unwavering drive to uphold the rights of individuals as they are guaranteed by the Constitution. His respect for our Constitution inspired him to develop a deep understanding of its intricacies. In service to our State, he has repeatedly applied this understanding to fulfill the pledge he made almost twenty-nine years ago, to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the State of Maryland. Along the way, he

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heightened and expanded our own constitutional comprehension.” Finally Judge Battaglia noted that “[a]lthough he will cease to sit regularly on this court after November 2003, his voice and wisdom will endure omnipresently as the opinions he has authored over these many years continue to shape the development of the law in our state.”

We could not agree more and congratulate Judge Eldridge on a wonderful life in the law.