

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE THIRD CIRCUIT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 25, 2024

It is with great sadness that the Judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit note the passing of our dear friend and colleague, the Honorable Walter K. Stapleton. Judge Stapleton passed away at the age of ninety on November 23, 2024.

Speaking on behalf of the Court of Appeals, Chief Judge Michael A. Chagares observed that “Walt Stapleton served the federal judiciary with distinction for more than five decades, a remarkable tenure that included service on the United States District Court for the District of Delaware and later the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Whether presiding at trial or on appeal, Judge Stapleton was universally admired as a model of integrity and fairness on the bench. Judge Stapleton was thoughtful, dedicated to his craft, and an exemplar of the spirit of collegiality valued by our Circuit. He was beloved by his law clerks and judicial colleagues alike, and a joy to be around professionally and personally. His wisdom, humor, and grace will be missed. While my colleagues and I are deeply saddened by Judge Stapleton’s passing, we will continue to cherish his legacy as a member of our Court and the Third Circuit community.”

Judge Stapleton earned an undergraduate degree in English from Princeton University, an LL.B. degree from Harvard Law School, and an LL.M degree from the University of Virginia School of Law. From 1959 until 1970, Judge Stapleton practiced law with the firm of Morris, Nichols, Arsht & Tunnell in Wilmington, Delaware. While at the firm, Judge Stapleton took leave to serve the people of Delaware as an assistant attorney general for the State. He took on additional public-service roles during those years with the Commission on Revision of the General Corporation Law of Delaware, as special counsel to Delaware Governor Russell W. Peterson, and as a member of the Governor's Commission on the Code of Ethics for State Employees.

In 1970, at age thirty-six, President Richard M. Nixon appointed Judge Stapleton to serve on the District Court for the District of Delaware. He was chief judge of that court from 1983 to 1985. President Ronald Reagan appointed Judge Stapleton to the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in 1985. Judge Stapleton served as a member of the Judicial Conference of the United States and chaired the Committee on Codes of Conduct for the Judicial Conference. He assumed senior judge status in 1999 and continued to perform substantial judicial duties well into his fifth decade of service, remaining engaged with the work of the Court and a regular presence at the Boggs Courthouse in Wilmington.

Among many accolades earned during his long career, Judge Stapleton received the American Inns of Court Professionalism Award in 2014. The award is given to an individual who demonstrates “integrity, professionalism, and dedication to the highest standards of the legal profession” – a most-fitting description of the qualities that Judge Stapleton exhibited throughout his illustrious tenure with the federal judiciary.

The Court of Appeals extends its deepest condolences to Judge Stapleton’s family.