

# **Judge Jim Wexstten**

## **5th DISTRICT APPELLATE JUDGE**

### **BIOGRAPHY**

**Jim Wexstten has over 30 years in the legal profession, 19 of those as a judge. Prior to his appointment to the Appellate Court by the Illinois Supreme Court, Jim served over 18 years as a Circuit Judge in the 12 counties of the Second Judicial Circuit. Twice, Judge Wexstten was elected the Chief Judge of the Circuit with the responsibility of assigning 20 judges, 14 court reporters, 35 probation officers, and working with the 12 circuit clerks, state's attorneys, numerous public defenders, as well as the county boards on budgetary matters. Prior to being elected Circuit Judge in 1988, Jim was engaged in the general practice of law with trial experience at both the state and federal levels and in both the trial and appellate courts.**

**Jim Wexstten was born in 1950 in Nokomis, Montgomery County, Illinois. Four generations of his family worked in the coal mines. Jim's younger brother is currently a United Mine Workers of America coal miner and his older brother was a school teacher and member and past president of his local teachers' union. Jim's grandmother was a precinct committeeman and secretary of the Montgomery County Democratic party in the 1950's and 1960's. Jim was first introduced to the Democratic party by going door-to-door for John F. Kennedy.**

**Jim Wexstten worked his way through college and law school and was himself a union carpenter and teacher. He attended Kaskaskia College and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in history education and then his Juris Doctor Degree from Southern Illinois University School of Law. Throughout his life, Jim has worked hard as a paperboy, grocery sacker, carpenter, teacher, lawyer, circuit judge, chief judge and, now, appellate judge.**

**As a lawyer, Jim received the highest national rating on legal ability, faithful obedience to ethical standards, and professional reliability and diligence. In 1988, Judge Wexstten won a contested primary receiving as many votes as his two opponents combined. In the general election, he defeated his Republican opponent by nearly 12,000 votes, a 56.5% to 43.5% margin of victory. Jim was retained in the office of Circuit Judge in 1994, 2000, and 2006, winning with an average of 73% of the vote.**

**In 1992, Jim was appointed by Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Benjamin K. Miller to be a participant in the Conference on “The Future and the Courts of Illinois,” a select group of individuals that helped formulate a progressive vision for the courts of the State of Illinois, and again was appointed in August 2001 as a member of that committee. Since 1992, the Illinois Supreme Court has on 8 occasions asked Judge Wexstten to teach judges throughout the state. He is a past President of the 1000+ membership of the Illinois Judges Association. In April 2001, Jim was appointed, with approval of the Supreme Court, to cochair the Illinois State Bar Association’s Special Committee on Funding the Courts in an effort to remove the burden of funding the trial courts from county taxpayers.**

**For eight years, Jim served on the Board of Directors, and for three years was president, of Prevent Child Abuse - Illinois, the Illinois Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse - America. He is the founder of the steering committee that established the Southern Thirty Adolescent Center which provides emergency shelter for abused and neglected children in the 30 southernmost counties of our state. Judge Wexstten has been a frequent speaker at numerous conferences throughout the state on issues such as domestic violence and the welfare of children. For his efforts, Judge Wexstten received the 2007 Child Advocate of the Year Award from the Downstate Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Abuse.**

**Jim and his wife, Darla, are members and elders of Grace Community Church, Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Darla has a master’s degree in social work and counsels children and families. They have three daughters: Elizabeth, Bria and Erin. Jim and Darla have six grandchildren.**