

Chief Judge of the State of New York



Janet DiFiore

Statement From Chief Judge Janet DiFiore
on the Passing of Associate Judge Paul G. Feinman

It is with deep sadness that I announce the death today of our beloved colleague, Paul G. Feinman, Associate Judge of the New York Court of Appeals. Judge Feinman was a bright, experienced and knowledgeable jurist who made an extraordinary impact on the Court of Appeals and the law of our state. He was also a kind and gentle man who was loved by many.

Judge Feinman graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1985 and began his legal career as a Staff Attorney with the Appeals Bureau of the Legal Aid Society of Nassau County. In 1989, he entered the court system as Law Clerk to Hon. Angela M. Mazzarelli in Supreme Court, New York County, and later served in the Appellate Division, First Department. Judge Feinman was elected to the New York City Civil Court in 1996, and to the Supreme Court for the First Judicial District in 2007. He was appointed by Governor Andrew Cuomo to the Appellate Division, First Department, in 2012, and to the Court of Appeals in June 2017.

Judge Feinman served with excellence at every level of our Judiciary, and his broad experience, knowledge and wisdom earned him the respect and warm personal regard of his judicial colleagues. Judge Feinman was a meticulous, disciplined and humble jurist who weighed the legal interests at stake in each case with great integrity in order to arrive at the correct and just result. His scholarly, well-written opinions reflect a deep knowledge of the law balanced with a generous humanity and commitment to justice. Judge Feinman had enormous respect for the Court of Appeals as an institution. Even as his illness progressed, his productivity and the quality of his writings and contributions never suffered. And no one could want for a warmer or more caring colleague than Paul Feinman.

Throughout his career, Judge Feinman was a tireless and resolute champion of LGBTQ rights, a trailblazing pioneer for LGBTQ lawyers and judges and an incredibly dedicated mentor who inspired countless judges, attorneys and law students. Judge Feinman devoted his entire professional life to public service and he gave back generously to our courts and the legal profession in innumerable capacities, including as Chair of the New York State Justice Task Force, Past President of the International Association of LGBT Judges and Past President of the Association of Supreme Court Justices of the State of New York.

Judge Feinman was the essence of personal and professional integrity, decency and civility. No one who knew Judge Feinman could be unmoved by his personal warmth and empathy, good humor and sparkling intelligence. He was a singular human being who has left a proud and enduring legacy for all of us.

We mourn Paul's passing, but we will always be inspired by his life and legacy. On behalf of the Judges and professional staff of the Court of Appeals and the entire New York State Unified Court System, we send our deepest condolences to Judge Feinman's husband, Robert Ostergaard, and his family and friends.

A private funeral service will be held for Judge Feinman's family and friends.

March 31, 2021