



NEWS RELEASE

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Retired Washington Justice Receives Top Award from National Court Organization

Williamsburg, VA (March 31, 2004) – Retired State Supreme Court Justice Charles Z. Smith is the recipient of the 2004 Distinguished Service Award, one of the highest awards presented by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The Distinguished Service Award is presented annually to a state appellate court judge who has made longstanding contributions to the improvement of the justice system and who has supported the mission of The National Center. Justice Smith will receive his award April 15 at the annual meeting of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts in Washington, D.C.

“As a leader in the legal profession, Justice Smith cares deeply about the importance of the work of this country’s justice system, and the mission of The National Center as the preeminent national court reform organization,” said Roger K. Warren, NCSC president.

Justice Smith’s contributions to the justice system are far-reaching. President Bill Clinton appointed him in 1999 to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, where he played several key roles and made international impact. Justice Smith helped to develop policies to end the civil war in Sudan, and combated persecution of religious minorities in countries such as China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, and Pakistan. In addition, from 1987 to 1990, Justice Smith served as chairperson of the Washington State Supreme Court’s Minority and Justice Task Force, and at that time he created a National Consortium to generate awareness and address issues of racial and ethnic fairness in state courts. He served as moderator of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts for 10 years.

Before joining the Supreme Court bench, Justice Smith served as deputy prosecuting attorney for King County, special assistant to the Attorney General of the United States, judge of the Seattle Municipal Court, judge of the King County Superior Court, and associate dean and law professor at the University of Washington.

The National Center for State Courts, founded in 1971 by Chief Justice of the United States Warren E. Burger, is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice and provides leadership, research, technology, education and training to the state courts. The National Center also is taking the lead on several key issues facing the justice system. For example, The National Center is working to improve public trust and confidence in the courts, reform the judicial selection process, develop a model policy on public access to court records, and to improve pro se litigation. The National Center is headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., and has offices in Washington, D.C. and Denver, Colo.

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