

Justice Michael Douglas Nevada Supreme Court

Justice Michael Douglas, the first African American justice in Nevada's history, was appointed to the Court in March 2004 to fill the vacancy that resulted from the death of Justice Myron E. Leavitt. Justice Douglas's appointment to the Supreme Court is the culmination of a 22-year legal career in Nevada that began by chance when he accepted what he thought was going to be a temporary job with Nevada Legal Services.

Justice Douglas, a native of Los Angeles, came to Las Vegas in 1982 from Philadelphia, Pa., where he had been working in private practice. The justice said he chose Las Vegas because he wanted to move back west and had a cousin living in the city. After two years at Nevada Legal Services, Justice Douglas was hired by the Clark County District Attorney's Office and served in the Civil Division until 1996. In January 1996, he was appointed to the Eighth Judicial District Court bench and was retained in the election later that year, serving until his appointment to the Supreme Court. At the District Court, he served as Business Court judge along with handling a variety of civil and criminal cases. He was elected Chief District Judge in October 2003.

A graduate of California State College, Long Beach, in 1971 and the University of California Hastings College of Law in 1974, Justice Douglas has been a member of the Judicial Council of the State of Nevada and Vice President of the Nevada District Judges Association. He is president-elect of the Nevada American Inns of Court, an organization of judges, lawyers and law students to promote excellence and civility in the legal profession.

He has been active in groups fighting domestic violence and also has served on a variety of law-related groups, including two years on the Nevada Law Foundation Board and seven years on the State Bar of Nevada, Southern Disciplinary Board.

Justice Douglas, who is married and has a daughter and two grandchildren, has been a longtime supporter of the youth in California and Las Vegas. He was a sports volunteer and coach and has been a frequent speaker at Las Vegas area schools. From 1996 to 2003, he was the judicial sponsor of the annual Spirit of the Arts Contest, a competition for student artwork emphasizing Nevada themes and spirit. Many of the winning pieces still hang in the Clark County Courthouse. His term ends in 2013.