

ARKANSAS COURT OF APPEALS

IN RE RETIREMENT OF JUDGE
RITA W. GRUBER

Opinion Delivered December 11, 2024

PER CURIAM

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

– attributed to John Wesley

Judge Rita W. Gruber’s life reflects this sentiment. A Pulaski County native and the first in her family to attend college, she graduated from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 1973 and from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law in 1979. After ten years in private practice, she became the Pulaski County Judge—the first woman to hold this position. Thereafter, she served the children and families of Pulaski and Perry Counties for eighteen years as a circuit judge for the Sixth Judicial District. While on the trial bench, she helped establish a volunteer probation officer program to work with first-time juvenile offenders. She also established a teen parenting program and a truancy alternative school. In 2008, Judge Gruber was elected to the Arkansas Court of Appeals; she was re-elected in 2016. During her tenure, she was deservedly appointed as the first woman chief judge of this court and served from 2017 through 2020.

Throughout her career, Judge Gruber has dedicated time and energy to both the legal community and the public through her service on numerous boards and committees, often in leadership roles. She served on the Arkansas Supreme Court Committee on Child Support and the Arkansas Judicial Council. She has been actively involved with the Pulaski County Bar Association, the Arkansas Bar Association, and the American Bar Association.

Judge Gruber has continually served as a mentor to lawyers—new and seasoned alike. In her time at this court, she has employed law students in her administrative-assistant position and every year has had externs from the state’s two law schools and beyond, providing a unique learning opportunity. She and her husband established the Judges Rita and Wayne Gruber Book Award, given annually to a deserving part-time law student at the

William H. Bowen School of Law. They presently are changing the focus to recognize externs who serve this court.

The Judges Gruber have been married for fifty-one years. They are exceptionally proud of their children, Regan and Will, both of whom are attorneys. They are the even prouder grandparents of Grant, Paige, Thatcher, and Allie.

Judge Gruber displays a calm graciousness under pressure, possesses an exceptional intellect and memory, and treats everyone she encounters with respect and dignity. She is an avid reader and a meticulous writer and editor. Our work is better for her having reviewed it.

The Arkansas Court of Appeals thanks Judge Gruber for her years of public service and immense contributions to the justice system and the people of Arkansas. She is a trusted colleague and friend to all who have been privileged to work with her. Her keen observations and ability to bring people together will be missed. Her colleagues express heartfelt appreciation to Judge Gruber for a lifetime of service to our state. We wish her the best in retirement.