

THE BAR REPORT

WEEKLY NEWS FROM THE NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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NJ Commission on Professionalism in the Law honors O'Hern, Hollenbeck and Lighthouse recipients for commitment to highest standards, achievement

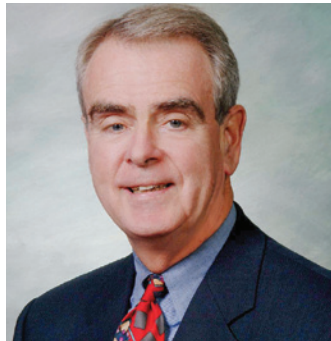
The New Jersey Commission on Professionalism in the Law will again honor individuals who uphold the profession's highest ideals and who have accomplished outstanding career achievement.

This year's winners include a criminal defense attorney who litigated high-profile cases over a 50-year career, a senior appellate counsel in the Appeals Division in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey, and a retired judge and attorney who helped launch the hospice movement through landmark right-to-die cases. This year marks the commission's 25th anniversary.

Joseph A. Hayden Jr., a partner at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden in Hackensack, will receive the 2020 Daniel J. O'Hern Award. Sabrina G. Comizzoli, senior appellate counsel in the appeals division in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey, will receive the 2020 Charles J.

Hollenbeck Award. The Lighthouse Award will be given to retired Judge Paul W. Armstrong.

"The award recipients represent the best attributes of the legal profession. The Commission on Professionalism joins with its colleagues in recognizing the recipients for their dedication and commitment to the highest standards of professional integrity and personal courtesy while still vigorously advocating for the interests of their clients.



JOSEPH A. HAYDEN JR.
2020 Daniel J. O'Hern Award Recipient

We should all aspire to follow their example in our own professional endeavors," said Karol Corbin Walker, chair of the commission.

From civil rights marches to criminal defense

Hayden has litigated complex, high-profile criminal cases during a 50-year legal career, including the trial of former basketball star Jayson Williams and Joseph Ferriero, the former Bergen County democratic chairman. He was also part of the team that investigated hiring practices in Governor Phil Murphy's office. He served as a deputy attorney general in the organized crime and special prosecution section of the Division of Criminal Jus-



SABRINA G. COMIZZOLI
2020 Charles J. Hollenbeck Award Recipient

stice, where he tried the first wiretap case brought by New Jersey.

Hayden "has exemplified integrity, competence, high ethical standards and service to the bar and community," wrote Justin P. Walder, a partner at Pashman Stein Walder Stein, who has known Hayden for more than 40 years, in his nomination letter.

Hayden has long been involved in social justice issues. While an undergraduate, he participated in the Selma civil rights march and was a volunteer in a bail program after the Newark riots while attending Rutgers Law School. As a trustee for Integrity House, he has worked for more than a decade with individuals in recovery from addiction and with former Gov-



JUDGE PAUL W. ARMSTRONG (ret.)
Lighthouse Award Recipient

ernor James McGreevey on his prisoner re-entry projects, and serves on the board of the New Jersey Re-Entry Commission.

Hayden has received numerous accolades, including the commission's Professional Lawyer of the Year Award. He served on the New Jersey State Bar Association Judicial Prosecutorial Appointments Committee, was a founder and first president of the Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of New Jersey and served as president of the Association of the Federal Bar, from which he received the Justice William J. Brennan Award.

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Representing the federal government with integrity

Comizzoli was selected for the Holtenbeck Award for serving a governmental agency with diligence, competence and dedication to the profession. She has served in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey for 18 years.

"She has represented the federal government with integrity; she has exhibited a tireless work ethic, served as a model of professionalism, and mentored her junior colleagues—especially women—in their career path," Kerri E. Chewing, president of the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey, wrote in her nomination letter.

As senior appellate counsel, Comizzoli is primarily responsible for briefing and arguing criminal cases before the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, having argued 16 cases to date. For the past 10 years, she has served as an ethics advisor to the U.S. Attorney's Office, providing office-wide training, guidance and legal advice to employees on government ethics matters, such as conflicts of interest, recusals and outside activities.

From 2010 to 2018, Comizzoli was a member of the U.S. attorney's core leadership team, serving as executive assistant U.S. attorney, chief of staff and counsel to the U.S. attorney, and was responsible for a variety of critical functions in support of case-

related policy and administrative matters. In addition, she served for two years as the chief of the government fraud unit in the Criminal Division, where she supervised a team of prosecutors responsible for investigating and prosecuting criminal offenses affecting agencies of the federal government.

Prior to joining the U.S. Attorney's Office, Comizzoli was an assistant attorney general in the Civil Rights Bureau of the Office of the New York State Attorney General, where she handled affirmative civil rights litigation. She clerked for Judge Shiara A. Scheindlin in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York and for Judge Maryanne Trump Barry in the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

Comizzoli was president of the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey and serves as a member of the executive committee for the C. Williard Heckel Inn of Court.

A pioneer in patients' rights

Armstrong, who will receive the Lighthouse Award, currently serves as a senior policy fellow at the Bloustein Institute for Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. He also serves on the New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Professional Advisory Committee. The Lighthouse Award honors an attorney or judge whose professional and community-based efforts serve

as an inspiration to colleagues.

While serving as a Somerset County Superior Court judge for 18 years, Armstrong presided over many notable cases, including serial killer nurse Charles Cullen. As an attorney, he was a pioneer of patients' rights and argued several landmark cases before the New Jersey Supreme Court and U.S. Supreme Court. He successfully argued the Karen Ann Quinlan case, which became a catalyst for the hospice movement. And his representation in the case of Nancy Beth Cruzan, a car accident victim, helped promote greater use of living wills and advance directives.

He was a principal draughtsman and legislative architect of the New Jersey Advanced Directives for Health Care and the Declaration of Death Acts.

Armstrong has served as chairman of the New Jersey Bioethics Commission and the Governor's Advisory Council on AIDS. He is an adjunct professor at Rutgers Law School-Newark and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, where he teaches about the interrelationship of medicine, ethics and law.

"Judge Armstrong is a brilliant jurist who served with distinction for 18 years during which time he treated litigants and attorneys alike with the utmost dignity and respect. He is a consummate gentleman to all who have the privilege to interact with

him," said Heidi Ann Lepp, president of the Somerset County Bar Association.

"After retirement from the bench, he continues to reflect the ideals of professionalism through his extensive *pro bono* work teaching as a senior policy fellow at Rutgers University, serving on advisory committees and continuing to work with the Samaritan Homeless Interim Program, of which he was a founding member."

The Professionalism Awards are traditionally presented at an annual luncheon but will not be held this year because of the pandemic. Visit the commission's web page under the resources tab at njsba.com to read more about the 25th anniversary and the award recipients. A video of Hayden, Comizzoli and Armstrong making their acceptance speeches will soon be available on the web page and the NJSBA Facebook page, and their speeches will soon be available on the CommunityNET blog at njsba.com.