



John W. Lord, Jr.

Born: December 19, 1901, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Died: May 16, 1972, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Federal Judicial Service:

Judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

Nominated by Dwight D. Eisenhower on March 29, 1954, to a seat vacated by James P. McGranery.

Confirmed by the Senate on May 18, 1954, and received commission on May 20, 1954. Served as chief judge, 1969-1971. Assumed senior status on December 19, 1971.

Service terminated on May 16, 1972, due to death.

Education:

Temple University School of Law (now James E. Beasley School of Law), LL.B., 1928

Professional Career:

Private Practice, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 1928-1954

Professor of Law, Temple University: 1938-1954

Deputy Attorney General, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 1939-1946

State Senator, Pennsylvania: 1947-1951

City Councilman, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 1952-1954

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Judicial Biography

*In January 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the victorious World War II General, became the first Republican President in twenty years and held office for two terms. The appointment of a number of Republican judges to the Eastern District was on the horizon.

President Eisenhower's first nomination came about in 1954 when he selected John Whitaker Lord, Jr., to fill the seat previously held by Judge McGranery, who had resigned in 1952 to become President Truman's Attorney General. Lord was supported by Senator Edward Martin, who had recently won re-election by defeating Guy Bard. In less than two months after his name was submitted to the Senate, Lord was confirmed and sitting as a judge. He was an extremely affable individual and during his years on the bench was well-known for his accommodation of lawyers.

Born in 1901 and a native of the Germantown section of Philadelphia, Lord was graduated from Temple Law School in 1928. Thereafter he became a partner at what is now known as White & Williams and taught part-time at his alma mater. He was also active in Republican politics. For a number of years, he held the position of Deputy State Attorney General. He won election as a state senator from the Northwest section of Philadelphia in 1946 but was unsuccessful in his bid for a second term in 1950 as the city was becoming increasingly more Democratic.

In the spring of 1951, the voters of Philadelphia adopted a new Home Rule Charter which guaranteed two of the seven at-large seats on City Council to the minority party. Lord was elected in the fall as one of the two Republican councilmen-at-large as the reformed Democratic ticket was being swept in office. Joseph S. Clark became the first Democratic mayor in sixty-seven years, and Richardson Dilworth won as the District Attorney. Throughout his political career, Lord was greatly aided by his dynamic wife Lilius who was a leader in Republican women's circles and whose trademark was her large hats.

In the late 1960's, the Federal Judicial Center persuaded the Court to experiment with an individual calendar system for both criminal and civil cases. In contrast to the then current practice, the proposed system called for a case to be assigned to a judge at random when it was first filed with that same judge presiding over the matter for all purposes until its conclusion. The judge would set deadlines, resolve all motions, have responsibility for case management, and try the case if necessary. Those advocating this change argued that cases would move toward trial and be resolved much more expeditiously than under the master calendar system. Two of the newer judges, John Fullam and Charles Weiner, agreed to participate in a pilot program. In due course, it was apparent that efficiency and backlog reduction were the clear result.

* The following material is excerpted from JUDGE HARVEY BARTLE, III, MORTALS WITH TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITIES, A HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, 3-12 (Saint Joseph's University Press, 2011). Reproduced with the permission of the author, Judge Harvey Bartle, III, and the publisher, Saint Joseph's University Press.

Making the conversion applicable to all judges, however, was hotly contested. By the time the matter was ripe for decision, John Lord had succeeded Thomas Clary as Chief Judge. Following a vigorous discussion at a judges' meeting on June 25, 1969, in Courtroom #11 in the Courthouse at Ninth and Market Streets, Chief Judge John Lord cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of a court-wide individual calendar system. It took effect on January 1, 1970. As a result, the Eastern District of Pennsylvania became one of the first of the District Courts throughout the country to make this monumental shift. It remains in effect today and constitutes one of the most important administrative reforms in the history of the Court.

Judge Lord served as Chief Judge from 1969 to 1971, and assumed senior status on December 19, 1971. He served in that capacity until his death on May 16, 1972 at the age of 70, while attending a Temple Law School alumni dinner in Philadelphia.