Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor is the 10th chief justice and the first woman in Ohio history to lead the Ohio judicial branch.

Since she took office in 2011, Chief Justice O’Connor has led significant reforms and improvements in the Ohio judicial system, including cutting the Ohio Supreme Court budget, establishing a task force to examine court funding statewide, creating a committee to examine the administration of the death penalty, and proposing improvements to strengthen judicial elections in Ohio.

She first joined the Supreme Court of Ohio as an associate justice in January 2003. She was re-elected in November 2008 in a landslide victory in which she carried each of Ohio’s 88 counties and took approximately 68 percent of the vote. She was elected chief justice in 2010, by a 2-to-1 margin over her challenger and again carrying every county.

Her first statewide judicial election in 2002, in which she took more than 57 percent of the vote, made her the 148th justice to the court, the sixth woman to join the court, and gave the court its first-ever female majority.

Born in the nation’s capital, but raised in Strongsville and Parma, Chief Justice O’Connor’s career in public service and the law spans three decades and includes service as a private lawyer, magistrate, common pleas court judge, prosecutor, and Supreme Court justice.

She earned her bachelor of arts at Seton Hill College in 1973 before going on to earn her law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 1980.

While gaining experience in practice as an attorney during the early 1980s, Chief Justice O’Connor created a home for her family and her legal career in Northeast Ohio. Appointed a magistrate in Summit County in 1985, she served in that capacity until becoming a common pleas court judge in 1993. As a busy trial judge, Chief Justice O’Connor was selected by her peers to serve as the administrative judge — a testament to her ability to build coalitions and maintain collegiality while administering to the business of the courts.

She resigned from the bench to become the Summit County prosecuting attorney in 1995. There, she aggressively prosecuted repeat offenders, violent criminals, and public officials who committed ethical violations or improprieties, and lobbied the General Assembly for tougher laws on rape and gang-related offenses. Her untiring work received accolades from victims’ rights groups and educational institutions, and earned awards from Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Cleveland State University. In 1998, she was elected lieutenant governor — the second-highest official in the state. She became the governor’s chief advisor on criminal justice issues, serving as director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, and as chair of Ohio’s Security Task Force and the State Building Security Review Committee.
In the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, she led the state in its response to new threats of terrorism by working with law enforcement, Ohio EMA, and the Department of Homeland Security, efforts that garnered the praise of federal homeland security officials.

Chief Justice O’Connor also has raised two adult sons, Alex and Ed Kipp, who both married lovely, intelligent women, much to her surprise and delight. She also has two grandchildren, Xavier and Henry.

Chief Justice O’Connor has pursued an extensive agenda for strengthening the third branch of Ohio government in a number of key areas:

• **BUDGET**: Chief Justice O’Connor appointed a task force on the judicial budget to identify the method and manner by which Ohio courts are funded, determine the long-term efficacy of the current funding models, and review possible alternatives that might provide sustained and consistent funding for Ohio courts. A statewide survey was conducted in 2013, and the task force is preparing a report and recommendations.

• **JUDICIAL ELECTIONS**: After months of studying the issue and discussing it with major stakeholders, Chief Justice O’Connor, in May 2013, announced an 8-point plan for improving judicial selection in Ohio and began a campaign for collecting public input on the ideas. In 2014, she plans to propose a final plan based on the feedback and to begin the process of working with legislative leaders on measures. More information is available at www.OhioCourts2013.org.

• **DIVERSITY**: Chief Justice O’Connor continued strong support for the Law and Leadership program that prepares the next generation of urban students to consider a career in the law, announced support for developing a diversity curriculum for judges, and has made enhancing the diversity of the bench and bar a top priority.

• **DEATH PENALTY**: In a cooperative effort between the Supreme Court of Ohio and the Ohio State Bar Association, Chief Justice O’Connor led the establishment of the Joint Task Force to Review the Administration of Ohio’s Death Penalty, a group of 21 judges, prosecuting and defense attorneys, and lawmakers, to examine ways to ensure the administration of capital punishment is fair and judicious. The group is expected to issue a report in the spring of 2014.

• **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**: Chief Justice O’Connor is active in encouraging members of the judiciary to be active members of their communities by volunteering and engaging in worthwhile causes, while dispelling the common misconception that judges are separate and apart from the communities they serve.

• **CLE**: Working with judges and the organized bar associations, Chief Justice O’Connor led an effort to reform and improve the system of continuing legal education for judges and lawyers, including expanded use of technology and distance learning. The new rules went into effect January 1, 2014.

• **COMMERCIAL DOCKETS**: Chief Justice O’Connor led the effort to establish rules that allow certain qualified courts to create separate dockets to resolve business-to-business disputes fairly and efficiently. The rules went into effect in July 2013, and commercial dockets are now successfully operating in Cuyahoga, Hamilton, and Lucas counties.
LEGAL EXPERIENCE
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio
• Elected in November 2010; term began January 1, 2011
Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio
• Elected in November 2002; term began January 2003
• Re-elected in November 2008; term began in January 2009
Prosecuting Attorney, Summit County
• Served from 1995 to 1999
Judge, Summit County Court of Common Pleas
• Served from 1993 to 1995 and elected by her peers to serve as administrative judge
Magistrate, Summit County Probate Court
• Appointed in 1985 and served until 1993
Attorney, private practice of law
• Practiced from 1981 to 1985; handled both criminal and civil cases

STATEWIDE PUBLIC SERVICE
Lieutenant Governor and Director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, State of Ohio
• As lieutenant governor from 1999 to 2003, Chief Justice O’Connor also chaired the State of Ohio Security Task Force and the State Building Security Review Committee

HONORS AND AWARDS
• Public Service Award, Ohio Association for Civil Trial Attorneys, 2014
• Honorary Doctor of Laws, University of Akron School of Law, 2013
• Commencement Speaker for the University of Akron School of Law, 2013
• Alumnus of the Year, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, 2012
• Founders’ Award, Ohio Women’s Bar Association, 2011
• Pioneer Award, Akron Bar Association, 2011
• Irish Legal 100, 2010
• Commencement Speaker for Seton Hill College, May 2001
• Commencement Speaker for Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, 1999
• Cleveland State University Distinguished Alumnae Award for Civic Achievement, 1997
• MADD Law Enforcement Award, Summit County, Ohio, 1997

EDUCATION
• Bachelor of Arts, Seton Hill College, 1973
• Juris Doctor, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, 1980

PROFESSIONAL
Member, Board of Directors, Conference of Chief Justices

PERSONAL
Born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Strongsville, Ohio and Parma, Ohio
Member of St. Vincent de Paul, Akron, Ohio
Children: Alex and Ed