

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

It's Worth Knowing What's Really Going On.

Retired judge finds peace in his new legal role

Timothy Batten to mediate at dispute resolution service JAMS in Atlanta.

By ROSIE MANINS

Casting off his judge's robe after almost two decades deciding federal cases across North Georgia, Timothy Batten says he felt a weight lift off his shoulders.

The 65-year-old has transitioned into the "third act" of his legal career as a mediator and arbitrator with JAMS in Atlanta. He said the new role satisfies his undiminished interest in complex disputes without the added challenges of being a judge.



Timothy Batten

Batten said he needed round-the-clock security while deciding one of the 2020 presidential election fraud cases filed by Sidney Powell and other attorneys associated with President Donald Trump. He dismissed that case as meritless and said more needs to be done to protect judges amid increasing threats from "the fringe."

Even more of a relief than stepping out of the spotlight was no longer having to deal with criminal cases and the burden of sentencing, Batten told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

"You're talking about taking away a person's liberty and freedom, often for decades," he said.

Batten brings empathy and high emotional intelligence to his work, said Kimberly Taylor, the president and CEO of



Timothy Batten, an arbitrator and mediator at JAMS in Atlanta, shows off his Scrabble tile cuff links. He has left the spotlight since retiring as a federal judge in the Northern District of Georgia.

NATRICE MILLER/AJC

JAMS, which touts itself as the largest private provider of alternative dispute resolution services worldwide.

Batten said he feels a sense of freedom as an arbitrator and mediator that he could not find on the bench.

Judges nationwide are under increasing threats, prompting calls for Congress to better protect them. In Georgia, new legislation shields judges' personal information from the public and provides

safety training.

Batten said he is also no longer constrained by the countless rules governing court cases. He said he can be creative in helping parties find middle ground and resolve their problems.

"I prefer putting people together and repairing relationships instead of just ensuring that they will probably never be repaired, which is what happens normally when there's a judgment or a verdict

METRO ATLANTA



Timothy Batten is in the “third act” of his legal career as an arbitrator and mediator, following more than four decades as a litigator and federal judge. PHOTOS BY NATRICE MILLER/AJC



Timothy Batten says he still loves working on complex disputes after more than four decades as a litigator and federal court judge.

from the court,” he said.

As an arbitrator, Batten’s role is similar to a judge in that he hears from everyone involved and decides what should happen. As a mediator, he makes no rulings and instead encourages conflicting parties to reach an agreement.

Batten said his first mediation in July was between business partners who had each spent hundreds of thousands of dollars litigating their falling out. He said they agreed to a seven-figure settlement.

Having spent more than four decades arguing and deciding disputes in court, Batten said he has learned a lot about the importance of people feeling heard and seen. He said he hasn’t tired of the work.

“There’s an old expression that all litigation is essentially about lying, cheating and stealing,” he said. “And there’s some truth to that, and it’s very interesting.”

Born in Atlanta and raised in Sandy Springs, Batten graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1981 with an industrial management degree. He graduated from the University of Georgia School of Law in 1984, then spent 22 years as a litigator at the Atlanta law firm Schreeder Wheeler & Flint.

Batten’s clients included large, self-insured companies such as Westinghouse, which he defended against personal injury lawsuits tied to the equipment it manufactured and installed for MARTA.

In 2006, Batten was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia by President George W. Bush. He said he remains deeply humbled and honored by the opportunity and will miss the court’s law clerks and judges he calls friends.

Batten served as the court’s chief judge from 2021 until his retirement in May.

He said he has been interested in mediation since he was a lawyer and that working at JAMS is a privilege. Batten said he also wants to spend more time with his wife, children and grandchildren now that he’s retired as a judge.