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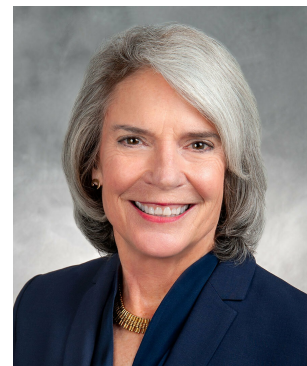
LAWYERS WHO SERVE

Litigation Section

# The Litigator

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**Hon. Cynthia Wright  
(Ret.)**

## Q&A with Hon. Cynthia Wright (Ret.)

### Highlighting Judge Wright's professional background & experiences

Ever since I was a small child, I was interested in politics, policy and government. Those interests are what drove me to attend law school. During law school, I interned with Sen. Sam Nunn in Washington, D.C., and I campaigned for Jimmy Carter in the New Hampshire primary and the Delaware general election. Upon graduation from the University of Georgia School of Law, I went to work with the university's Institute of Government, specializing in state and local government issues. George Busbee, one of Georgia's former governors, hired me as his assistant counsel, where I was in charge of tracking legislation and working as a liaison to state agencies. Several years later, I became executive counsel to a public corporation specializing in bond financing for first-time homebuyers and multi-family housing. In that position, I was frequently in Washington, D.C., and at the Georgia State Capitol to advocate for housing policies. Upon his election, Gov. Zell Miller hired me as his chief executive counsel, where I was in charge of drafting and helping to negotiate the passage of his legislative package, including securing legislative approval of his signature accomplishment: the state lottery constitutional amendment and enabling legislation. When a position on the State Court of Fulton County became available, the governor appointed me; and within months, a position on the superior court became available, and again he tapped me for that vacancy.

### The transition from Fulton Superior Court to JAMS ADR

My transition from the bench to JAMS has been fairly seamless. When I was on the bench, I did more bench trials than jury trials. From my perspective, arbitration is a first cousin to a bench trial. The arbitrator decides all questions of law and fact. The primary difference is that litigants can get a decision in arbitration more quickly and often less expensively because discovery is generally more limited.

### Judge Wright's ADR practices and unique/specialized areas

My JAMS caseload is weighted more heavily toward arbitration, although I have a fairly robust mediation practice as well. I have been asked to mediate cases involving counties and cities, heads of executive branches, school boards, county governing authorities, professional teacher organizations and more—likely because I have had considerable experience dealing with policy and politically charged issues my entire professional career.

### Importance of mentoring

I spent several years as an adjunct professor at Emory University School of Law, where I co-taught a class on negotiation (with Judge Jane Barwick) and one on pre-litigation (with Justice Carol Hunstein). Both of my parents were involved in higher education, and I saw the impact that each of them had on their respective students. It has given me great pleasure to see some of my former students excel in court and in mediation!

### Professionalism pointers for litigation and ADR practices

The best advice I can give to any litigator practicing before any state or federal court is to be respectful of the court's staff—from the scheduling assistant to the law clerk to the calendar clerk to the court reporter to the bailiff. These people work hard, and they are the heartbeat of the judiciary. And, importantly, they share stories with each other and with the judges. A slight to one is a slight to all. Remember the old adage that you may not remember what someone said, but you always remember how someone made you feel.