



What Virginia attorneys say about Judge Rosemarie Annunziata:

“When she walks into the room, you just feel better because you know she’s got it all together.”

“This judge is superb in her abilities, handling of cases, treatment of people [and] commitment to the law.”

“Judge Annunziata is one of our most talented and intellectual jurists. Her integrity and application of the law in an objective and evenhanded fashion are beyond reproach.”

“[A] compassionate, professional and skillful individual ... [W]ell prepared and works hard ... [O]ne of my favorite judges for complex cases.”

How did you get involved in the practice of law?

My involvement with the practice of law began when I was in my early thirties, after moving to Northern Virginia, where my husband, a civilian with the Air Force, accepted a position with the Pentagon. I was actively engaged in volunteer work relating to human rights and community needs and interests. Because I was a member of the League of Women Voters and was appointed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to the Fairfax County Tenant-Landlord Commission and the Substance Abuse Council of the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission, it became clear that the tools needed for orderly change and improvement in personal and community welfare resided in the law. It was a field in which to build upon my graduate studies in education and teaching at Yale, as well as develop my writing, editing and reporting skills, which I honed at one of Alabama’s major newspapers. I was admitted to the American University Washington College of Law as a mother of three young children, and still completed my degree in three years.

Tell us more about your legal career.

Upon graduation, like many women lawyers at the time, I was not able to secure a position with a law firm, so I began a solo trial practice and was then hired by an established, all-male litigation and real estate firm as its first woman lawyer. Three years later, I helped establish a successful small partnership specializing in complex tort matters. I completed my career as a practicing lawyer as of counsel to Dickstein, Shapiro & Morin in Washington, D.C. Over the 11 years I was a litigator, I represented clients in a wide array of matters, including civil, criminal and constitutional rights cases; discrimination and employment claims; professional negligence claims in medicine and law; and product defect cases, both against and on behalf of major manufacturers. I also represented clients in land use and zoning matters and conducted administrative due process hearings for both local and state government agencies.

How has the field of law changed for women lawyers over the years?

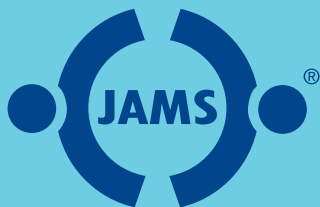
When I entered law school in 1978, fewer than 10% of those admitted were women. There were no women on the bench in Virginia and few, if any, women partners in Virginia’s major law firms. As a new lawyer, I joined with a small group of women lawyers to help form the Virginia Women Attorneys Association and, nearly 10 years later, when I was appointed to the bench in 1989, the National Association of Women Judges was fully functioning, and the International Association of Women Judges held its first meeting in Washington, DC. These professional associations of women lawyers and judges played a significant role in the evolution, development and success of women in the law. Currently, women are increasingly being recognized for providing legal advice and representation at the highest levels and are greatly sought after for their skill, leadership and commitment to their clients and the public interest.

What was the most interesting case you were involved in, either as a practicing attorney, judge or neutral?

The cases that stand out are those that catalyzed an important change in an industry practice or policy, as well as those that made whole the party claiming injury. Some examples include my role as a member of a litigation team whose successful trial of the issues resulted in an important change in child delivery protocols in two hospital systems in southwest Virginia, where

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“Judge Annunziata is a person of real stature, and we have been so fortunate having [her] serve in Fairfax County in so many roles, in particular the Civil Service Commission, the Planning Commission, the Circuit Court and the Court of Appeals. And when she indicated she was ready to pass the torch, we had to read up on what to do because we had relied so heavily on her over the years.”



1155 F Street, NW
Suite 1150
Washington, DC 20004

the obstetrical standard of care fell below that which was practiced in other parts of the state. I also litigated a major product defect claim involving a defect hidden by the manufacturer that was disclosed through the extensive discovery I conducted and that resulted in a major design modification. In another matter, in which I represented the defendant manufacturer, the company won a favorable verdict based on depositions I took and discovery of the claimant’s misuse of the product.

As a judge, one of the most notable cases is *Piatt v. Piau*, in which the Virginia Court of Appeals upheld a lower court decision granting primary physical custody of a divorced couple’s child to the husband. Both husband and wife violated different Virginia statutes by having extramarital relationships with women post separation. **The dissent I wrote was found to be one of the best examples of judicial decision-making that met the legal requirement for symmetry, adherence to the rule of law, impartiality, independence and freedom from bias, prejudice and partisanship.**

Tell us about your experience in public service.

In 1989, I was elected by the Virginia General Assembly to the Fairfax County Circuit Court, the largest trial court in Virginia, with a varied daily docket of both criminal and civil matters, including family law cases, fraud and defamation matters, state administrative agency disputes, medical malpractice disputes and complex discovery motions. I also presided over early neutral evaluation and settlement conferences. As a circuit court judge, I authored hundreds of written opinions to provide a clear, written analysis of the reasoning for my decisions. As an appellate court judge, I authored some of the most significant workers’ compensation and family law cases regarding support, property division and child custody. Prior to being elected to the bench, I was named counsel to the Fairfax County Civil Service Commission and then chair, an association with county employment policies and practices that spanned 21 years. I was also appointed to the Planning Commission by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and was responsible for advising the board on many of the most significant land use decisions in that time period.

What is your favorite pastime outside of the office?

Seeing theater, watching independent films and opera productions, and gardening.

What would fellow attorneys and former clients say about your skills and abilities?

I believe they would comment on my deep, sincere and pervading interest in people, their diversity and their interests and concerns in the context of their life story at the time of the dispute.

I have the ability to listen without making judgments, to express concepts clearly, to think analytically, to counsel and coach effectively, to reason and to facilitate discussion and settlement. I am committed to careful preparation, creative thinking and helping people and communities resolve problems.

To set a case with Judge Annunziata,
visit jamsadr.com/annunziata or call 202.942.9180.