



Evelyn Lundberg Stratton

Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, retired from the Supreme Court of Ohio after 23 years in the judiciary to pursue criminal justice reforms, particularly as they relate to mental health, juveniles, and veterans.

She came to the bench by a very different route. Born to missionary parents in Bangkok, Thailand, Stratton spent her childhood in Southeast Asia. She attended boarding school in South Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War and later in Malaysia, visiting America on occasion with her parents. At age 18, she returned to America alone with only a few hundred dollars in her pocket. Working her way through school, she earned a Juris Doctor degree from The Ohio State University College of Law.

She began her legal career as a trial lawyer in the courtrooms of Central Ohio. In 1989, she was the first woman to be elected Judge of the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, where she became known as “The Velvet Hammer” for her approach to sentencing in serious felony cases. Her success on the trial bench led to an appointment in 1996 to the Supreme Court of Ohio, where she was elected to a third term in 2008.

Stratton believes that the courts, in partnership with the mental health system, can affect positive change in the lives of many defendants whose mental illness has led to criminal activity. To that end, she formed the Supreme Court of Ohio Advisory Committee on Mental Illness & the Courts, which was composed of mental health, law enforcement and criminal justice professionals who were dedicated to mental health initiatives in the court system. That committee has now merged into the Attorney General Task Force on Mental Illness and Criminal Justice, and she still serves as co-chair along with Attorney General Mike DeWine.

Nationally, Stratton is a co-founder and former co-chair of the Judges’ Leadership Initiative, a professional association that supports cooperative mental health programs in the criminal justice system. Her latest focus in Ohio and nationally is on establishing veterans courts to help those returning veterans with Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury and other issues, whose problems may lead to involvement in the criminal justice system.

Since retiring from the bench, she works through EStratton Consulting, LLC on criminal justice reforms, particularly focusing on engaging the judges in different states in these reform efforts. She is also Of Counsel to a major Ohio law firm, Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP.

Among her many honors are the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Angels Award, as well as the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Adoption Excellence Award.

Additionally, in May 2008, Stratton received an Ellis Island Medal of Honor at a ceremony in New York City. Established in 1986 by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations, the Ellis Island Medals of Honor pay tribute to American citizens of diverse origins for their outstanding contributions to their communities, their nation and the world. Ranking among the nation's most prestigious awards, recipients are listed in the Congressional Record.

Stratton is the wife of John A. Lundberg III, and the mother of two adult sons. She enjoys painting, Thai cooking, and fly fishing with her husband. But surely her most interesting accomplishment was her first-place finish in a college Stampede Girls Goat Tying Competition — a talent she later put to good use as a trial lawyer.