

# Skadden and The University of Alabama Announce the Winner of the Morris Dees Justice Award

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates and The University of Alabama School of Law announced today that United States District Judge William Wayne Justice, of the Eastern District of Texas, has been awarded the 2006 Morris Dees Justice Award. The award will be presented in New York on November 16, 2006.

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Today Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates and The University of Alabama School of Law announced that United States District Judge William Wayne Justice, of the Eastern District of Texas, has been selected as the winner of the 2006 Morris Dees Justice Award. Morris Dees will present the award during a reception at Skadden's offices in New York on November 16, 2006.



Judge William Wayne Justice

The Morris Dees Justice Award was created in 2006 by Skadden and The University of Alabama School of Law to honor Dees, an Alabama graduate, for his life-long devotion to public service. The award will be given annually to a lawyer who has devoted his or her career to serving the public interest and pursuing justice, and whose work has brought about positive change in the community, state or nation.

The Selection Committee recognized Judge Justice for his life-long efforts to protect civil rights and safeguard constitution rights, including more than 30 years of service as a federal district court judge. His notable cases dealt with integration, prisoners' rights, procedural due process, equal access to education, treatment of immigrants, dilution of voting rights and care for the mentally challenged.

Judge Justice was nominated by over 100 people from across the nation, including judges, law school deans, bar associations, his former clerks and secretary. The nomination noted, "Judge Justice has, just like Morris Dees, been a front line soldier in many of the pitched battles that have shaped American justice for the last half century . . . ."

Judge Justice was born in 1920 in Athens, Texas. He graduated from the University of Texas School of Law in 1942, joined the U.S. Army and served in India during World War II. In 1946, he joined his father's private law practice in Athens, Texas. William's father was a voice for the disadvantaged. Judge Justice served as city attorney in Athens, Texas, for eight years before President Kennedy selected him in 1961 to serve as the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas. In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him to the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of Texas, sitting in Tyler. Judge Justice took senior status in 1998.

Although his career on the bench has been a long and distinguished one, Judge Justice is best known for two cases: *Ruiz v. Estelle* and *United States v. Texas*.

In 1972, inmate David Ruiz wrote his civil rights complaint, which was combined with others to become *Ruiz v. Estelle*. The trial, which began in October 1978, lasted a year. Three hundred and forty-nine witnesses testified. The case resulted in a complete overhaul of the Texas prison system.

In November 1970, Judge Justice ordered the Texas Education Agency to begin desegregating the Texas public schools. The desegregation order, known as *United States v. Texas*, applied to more than 1,000 school districts and two million students.

His ruling in *Plyer v. Doe* (1982) opened the doors for the children of undocumented aliens to attend public schools tuition free through grade twelve.

The winner was selected by a distinguished committee which included Professor Jesse Choper, Boalt Hall School of Law; Marcia D. Greenberger, Co-President, National Women's Law Center; Marjorie Press Lindblom, Co-Chair, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Theodore M. Shaw, Director-Counsel and President, NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund; Tisha Tallman, Regional Counsel, Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund; Dean Kenneth A. Randall, The University of Alabama School of Law; Robert Sheehan, Executive Partner, Skadden; Robert Grey, former president of the American Bar Association; Professor Bryan Fair, The University of Alabama School of Law; Vaughn C. Williams, Partner, Skadden; Susan Butler Plum, Director of the Skadden Fellowship Foundation; and Mary Bauer, Southern Poverty Law Center.

A sculpture to commemorate the award was created by Jillian Crochet, a University of Alabama art student. Crochet won the competition to design the award.

Dees is the co-founder and chief trial counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. The Center is internationally known for tracking hate groups and extremist activity, conducting tolerance training education and winning cases against white supremacists. Dees is a 1960 graduate of The University of Alabama School of Law.

More information about the award is available at [www.morrisdeesaward.com](http://www.morrisdeesaward.com).