



Hon. Judge Richard Linn

Senior Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

A Judicial Life of Professionalism, Integrity, and Enduring Influence

by Teresa M. Summers



Teresa M. Summers served as a law clerk to the Honorable Richard Linn of the Federal Circuit from 2005 to 2007. Currently, Ms. Summers represents clients in intellectual property, regulatory, and commercial matters, including litigation, licensing, contracts, FDA regulatory matters, and counseling. Ms. Summers also helped to establish the Tokyo IP American Inn of Court, the first Inn of Court based in Japan and the first American Inn of Court based outside of the U.S. and, for her role in the creation of the Tokyo IP American Inn of Court, Ms. Summers received a Distinguished Service Medal by the Linn Inn Alliance.

Hon. Richard Linn, Senior United States Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, has shaped the intellectual-property landscape with breadth, depth, and humanity. His legacy is not confined to the jurisprudence of the Federal Circuit, although that alone would mark an extraordinary career. Rather, Judge Linn's influence radiates through the generations of lawyers he mentors, the institutions he built, the values he champions, and the countless individuals who describe him as the embodiment of professionalism, civility, gratitude, and intellectual rigor.

Across decades of service—as jurist, mentor, institution-builder, and ambassador for civility—Judge Linn has left an indelible mark on the legal profession. Judge Linn is a man whose character, unwavering integrity, and deep humanity have influenced generations of lawyers and strengthened the practice of law itself. His story is one of remarkable evolution—rooted in engineering, elevated by legal excellence, and distinguished by a dedication to community and character that has transformed the practice of law.

Origins in Brooklyn: The Foundations of Curiosity and Craft

Judge Linn's journey begins in Brooklyn, New York, where he was raised in a household that nurtured creativity and technical curiosity. His father enjoyed a first career as a professional musician and band leader before opening a small business repairing radios, televisions, and record players. Amidst the tools and wires, young Richard developed a fascination with electronics that would shape both his education and his early professional life.

This passion drew him naturally to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he earned a degree in electrical engineering. It was at RPI that he first encountered the possibility of a legal career when he met his future Federal Circuit colleague, Judge Arthur Gajarsa. Their conversations revealed that many engineers had found meaningful futures in patent law, a revelation that sparked the “unusual



chain of events” that redirected his career path from engineering to the law.

The Engineer Who Became a Lawyer

Following this new calling, Judge Linn enrolled in Georgetown University Law Center's evening division, balancing his studies with full-time work as a patent examiner at the U.S. Patent Office. His early legal career, which included positions as a patent advisor at both the U.S. Naval Research Center and the U.S. Naval Air Systems Command, afforded him rare insight into the development and application of patent rights from the inside out.

He soon transitioned into private practice, where he joined the general practice firm of Wender, Murase & White (later Marks & Murase). There, he founded and led an intellectual-property group—an innovative move at a time when such practices were not yet common in full-service firms. His leadership over two decades established him as a pioneer in integrating sophisticated IP practice into broader commercial legal work. He later joined Foley & Lardner, where he headed the firm's Electronic Practice Group and forged a relationship with Harold Wegner that proved meaningful.



Above left: Judge Linn and Patti Linn hosting their Annual Linn Chambers Family Mid-Winter BBQ at their home on January 14, 2017 with current and former law clerks and spouses and Judge Linn's "grand-clerks;" Below left: Judge Linn introducing keynote speaker, Paul Clement, at the May 10, 2025 Annual Dinner of the Giles S. Rich American Inn of Court held at the United States Supreme Court.

Elevation to the Federal Circuit: A Jurist Takes the Bench

By his own account, Judge Linn never aspired to join the federal judiciary. That changed when his colleague, esteemed scholar Harold Wegner, urged him to consider the role and shepherded the process that led to his being nominated by President Bill Clinton in 1999. After his confirmation by the United States Senate, Judge Linn assumed the seat formerly held by Judge Giles S. Rich, one of the most influential jurists in the history of patent law, and was sworn in at the stroke of midnight on January 1, 2000, making him the first appointed Federal Judge in the new century. He entered senior status in 2012.

Reflecting on his remarkable career, Judge Linn has often expressed gratitude for having experienced intellectual-property law from nearly every vantage point: as an examiner, prosecutor, litigator, advisor, and judge. This multifaceted perspective imbues his judicial work with exceptional insight and balanced judgment.

A Chambers Defined by Integrity, Collegiality, and Human Connection

Central to Judge Linn's legacy is the profound mentorship he provides to law clerks and young attorneys. He describes the relationship between a judge and clerk as a uniquely intense and significant bond, shaped by collaborative work on matters of great consequence. From his very first law clerk, to clerks who joined him over a decade later, the theme is unmistakable: Judge Linn shapes not only the intellectual development of young lawyers, but their character, their values, and even their lives. He invests time and care in mentoring—to foster collegiality, reflection, and professional growth.

Judge Linn runs his chambers with a deliberate sense of collegiality, encouraging clerks to view themselves



as partners rather than subordinates and to speak their minds freely. Many of us in the clerk family fondly recall weekly mentorship lunches, spirited discussions, and an atmosphere of mutual respect and intellectual openness. Judge Linn installed values that go beyond the typical clerkship experience. He installed lifelong commitments to kindness, professionalism, and balance to our chambers family.

Judge Linn's character is further demonstrated through his interactions with colleagues, court staff, and litigants. He treats everyone with respect and civility, leading by example and reminding those around him that "everybody brings something to the party."

Architect of the Linn Inn Alliance and a Champion of Civility

Judge Linn's commitment to the legal profession is perhaps nowhere more visible than in his transformative work with the American Inns of Court. His leadership in expanding and strengthening the community of intellectu-



Above left: Judicial Attendees at the Annual Scholarship Dinner of the Richard Linn American Inn of Court, held on July 31, 2025 at the Peninsula Hotel Chicago. Pictured, left to right, Paula Holderman, Judge James Holderman (Ret.), Magistrate Judge Beth Jantz, Judge John Kness, Magistrate Judge Arlander Keys (Ret.), Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer, Annette Keys, Dan McAdams, Judge Richard Linn, Patti Linn, and Judge Thomas Durkin.; below left: Judge Linn and his wife of 59 years, Patti Linn, vacationing at Bald Head Island, NC on July 17, 2025.



al-property-focused Inns resulted in the vibrant network now known as the Linn Inn Alliance. Recognizing the need to bring together existing Intellectual Property Inns, he conceived the Alliance to foster reciprocity, allowing members to participate in IP Inns across different cities.

His role was not symbolic; he personally assisted in founding new Inns across the United States, offering guidance, encouragement, and an unwavering belief in the power of shared professional values. Judge Linn's dedication to gathering these Inns, sharing ideas, and building community was met with enthusiasm, leading to the rapid establishment of new IP Inns nationwide.

Soon thereafter, Judge Linn helped organize the first and only IP American Inn of Court outside the United States, in Tokyo, Japan. His encouragement transformed the Tokyo members' approach to professional development, introducing meaningful discussion and social bonding that were previously unfamiliar.

Now, the Linn Inn Alliance stands at an impressive 30 IP Inns, many if not most of which Judge Linn helped to thrive. In each case, Judge Linn's guidance, attention, and care have been pivotal to building professional communities dedicated to excellence and collegiality.

A Visionary Founder of The Naples Roundtable and Promoter of Progress in the Patent System

Judge Linn's passion to promote discourse about IP issues did not stop at the Inns of Court. In 2016, Judge Linn co-founded The Naples Roundtable™ alongside Hal Wegner, establishing a novel forum for the advanced study of intellectual property law and policy. Under his visionary leadership, the Roundtable has become a beacon for thoughtful dialogue and meaningful reform in the U.S. patent system.

When Senator Patrick Leahy, a close friend of Judge Linn, learned about The Naples Roundtable and its mission to strengthen and advance the U.S. patent system, he was immediately intrigued. Inspired by their shared vision, Judge Linn and Senator Leahy spearheaded the creation of the Leahy Institute of Advanced Patent Studies—an enduring tribute to Senator Leahy's commitment to intellectual property. Each year, the Institute convenes in Naples, Florida, bringing together leading minds to collaborate on preserving the vitality of the patent system and its essential role in driving innovation.

Judge Linn's dedication to intellectual property law reflects a belief that the patent system is not static but a living framework that must evolve to meet the needs of



Judge Linn with current and former law clerks at the January 16, 2017 Leahy Institute Conference hosted by the Naples Roundtable, Inc. at the Naples Grande Hotel in Naples, Florida. The Naples Roundtable was co-founded by Judge Linn and Harold C. Wegner in 2014 and hosts the Leahy Institute Conference each year with the goal of strengthening and improving the United States Patent System.

innovation. Through candid dialogue, scholarly rigor, and a spirit of collaboration, his efforts with The Naples Roundtable and the Leahy Institute ensure that the patent system remains fair, predictable, and robust—a cornerstone of progress for generations to come.

A Devoted Husband and Father to Many

Judge Linn has long emphasized that legal excellence must coexist with personal well-being. He reminds clerks and students alike through his actions and his words that a lawyer's reputation begins and ends with integrity, and that professional success unaccompanied by personal balance can never bring fulfillment. Judge Linn embraces a new understanding of "IP": "integrity" and "priority." Integrity is the foundation of credibility and the cornerstone of every successful legal career. Priority speaks to the balance lawyers must strike between professional obligations and personal commitments—a balance essential not only to happiness but to ethical and effective practice.

While his chambers have become a second family, welcoming spouses and even the children of former clerks, who affectionately refer to themselves as "grand-clerks," Judge Linn lights up when speaking of cherished moments with his own growing family—his two daughters, grandchildren, and his new great-grandson. Yet, he is most radiant in the presence of his beloved wife, Patti. One cannot help but feel the love that emanates from their relationship. Throughout decades of distinguished and demanding service, Judge Linn has consistently acknowledged Patti's steadfast support as an enduring source of strength. His tributes

to the centrality of family embody the humility and grace that have long defined both his professional legacy and personal life.

Conclusion: A Legacy of Excellence and Humanity

Judge Linn's influence extends far beyond his judicial decisions. He has created pathways for professional growth, built communities of excellence, and inspired generations of lawyers to uphold the values of integrity, civility, and collegiality. The life and career of Judge Richard Linn reflect the best traditions of the legal profession. His legacy is not confined to the cases he has decided, nor even to the institutions he has built, but lives most fully in the countless individuals he has inspired.

In closing, and as a personal note, I have been honored to know Judge Linn for over 20 years. He and Patti are family to me. I cannot thank Judge Linn enough for the lessons he taught me and the many opportunities he gave me to advance my career as a lawyer. Through both word and example, Judge Linn taught me the importance of relentlessly guarding integrity and honesty, consistently treating each other with respect, and aspiring to excellence in every aspect of practice.

Judge Linn stands as a testament to what the law can be when practiced with intellect, humility, and heart. His career is a model for judges, lawyers, and students alike—a reminder that professionalism is not merely an aspiration but a daily practice, and that a life in the law is richest when guided by respect for others, devotion to excellence, and gratitude for the relationships that sustain us. ☺