



David Knutson

Retired Judge of District Court

Mediator | Arbitrator | Special Master

David.Knutson@PowerHouseMediation.com

(612) 895-2210

“After more than three decades serving the public as a judge, legislator, and lawyer, I’ve seen how mediation offers people something the courtroom often can’t: a chance to be heard, to craft their own solutions, and to resolve disputes with clarity and respect.” - Judge David Knutson (ret.) | PowerHouse

BIOGRAPHY

Judge David L. Knutson (Ret.) brings a distinguished record of service to his work as a mediator and arbitrator through PowerHouse Mediation, where he focuses on civil and family matters, arbitration, and special master assignments. With experience spanning 18 years in private practice, years in legislative leadership, and over two decades on the bench, Judge Knutson offers deep insight into the legal system and a balanced, practical approach to dispute resolution.

Appointed to the Dakota County District Court in 2004 by Governor Tim Pawlenty, he was re-elected in 2006, 2012, 2018, and 2024, serving until his retirement in 2025. During his judicial tenure, he served as Assistant Chief Judge of the First Judicial District, sat on the Minnesota Judicial Council, chaired the Board on Judicial Standards, and presided over both Juvenile and Adult Treatment Courts. He has been a frequent presenter for new judge orientation and statewide judicial conferences.



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BIO (Continued)

Before joining the bench, Judge Knutson served in the Minnesota State Senate from 1993–2004, including seven years as Assistant Minority Leader, and practiced law for nearly two decades as a partner in several firms. His breadth of experience across civil, family, criminal, and legislative matters allows him to guide parties through complex disputes with both authority and empathy.

At PowerHouse Mediation, Judge Knutson combines his judicial experience, legislative insight, and practical problem-solving skills to help parties reach fair, durable, and efficient resolutions.

PRACTICE AREAS

- Civil Mediation
- Family Mediation
- Civil Arbitration
- Family Arbitration
- Special Master Assignments

EDUCATION

- William Mitchell College of Law – J.D.
- St. Olaf College – B.A., Philosophy & Political Science

BAR ADMISSIONS

- State of Minnesota – 1986
- U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota – 1986
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit – 1987
- U.S. Tax Court – 1989



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PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

District Court Judge, First Judicial District (Dakota County) – 2004–2025

- Assistant Chief Judge (2017–2021); Senior Judge appointment (2025)

Private Practice – 1986–2004

Partner/shareholder in Knutson & Knutson; Knutson, Stier, Ilstrup & Knutson; Otten & Knutson; Knutson Law Office; and Severson, Sheldon, Dougherty & Molenda, P.A.

Minnesota State Senator – 1993–2004

- Represented Apple Valley, Burnsville, Lakeville, and Rosemount; Assistant Minority Leader (1995–2002)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Minnesota District Judge's Association
- Dakota County Bar Association
- Minnesota Legislative Society
- Warren Burger Inn of Court (member 2009- 2022, President 2018-2019)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A lifelong community leader, Judge Knutson has served on numerous nonprofit and civic boards, including the Burnsville Breakfast Rotary (Charter Member and President), Dakota County Law Library Board, YMCA, Legal Assistance of Dakota County, and multiple Chambers of Commerce. He has also supported youth through mock trial judging and coaching, as well as service on local foundations.



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PROFESSIONAL JUDICIAL ACTIVITIES

Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission, member
Assistant Chief Judge- First Judicial District
Minnesota Judicial Council (governing body of MN courts)
Human Resources and Education Committee
Finance Committee
Court Operations Committee
State Court Administrator Selection Committee
Legislative Advisory Workgroup
MN Court Records Online (MCRO) Work Group
Board on Judicial Standards Appointed by Governor Mark Dayton
Chair of the Board
Executive Committee member
Dakota County Adult Treatment Court Judge
Dakota County Juvenile Court Judge
Judicial Extern Student Supervisor, WMCL
Judicial Mentor, University of St. Thomas Law School

MINNESOTA STATE SENATE

Minnesota State Senator (1993-2004)
elected 1992, re-elected 1996, 2000, and 2002
Represented portions of the Cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Lakeville,
and Rosemount.
Assistant Minority Leader (1995-2002)

STATE LEGAL TASK FORCES, MEMBER

Civil Legal Assistance
Juvenile Detention Facilities
Foster Care and Adoption
Parental Cooperation
Commission on Legal Services

SENATE COMMITTEES

Served on the following committees: Crime Prevention and Public Safety; Finance; State Government Budget Division; Rules and Administration; Judiciary; K-12 Education; Jobs and Housing Finance; Family Services, and Taxes



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PRESENTATIONS

- Presenter/Speaker: New Judge Orientation, MN Judicial Branch
MN Judicial Branch Winter Conf., and MDJA Annual Conf.
- Citizens Police Academy
- Numerous High School, College and Community legal presentations

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Henry Toll Fellowship Leadership Training, Council of State Governments, Lexington, KY
- Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) Fellow, La Follette Institute of Public Affairs, U of WI
- Mediation Training, 40 hours,
- Joint Trial Advocacy Course, County Attorneys/Public Defenders Bemidji State University, 1 week course

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Charles Umbanhower, Sr. Distinguished Alumni Award
(St. Olaf College, Political Science Department)
- Burnsville High School Hall of Fame
- Outstanding Orator Award – Checks and Balances
- Legislator of the Biennium – MN Retailers Association
- American Council of Young Political Leaders
Delegation Escort to Turkey, 2 week leadership exchange
Delegate to Tanzania and Uganda, 2 week leadership exchange
- YMCA Distinguished Volunteer Award
- Pro Bono Publico Attorney Award (Minnesota Legal Services Coalition)
- Lake Conference Distinguished Alumni Award
- Ten Outstanding Young Minnesotans Award (Minnesota Jaycees)
- Eagle Scout Award (Boy Scouts of America)



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COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Burnsville Breakfast Rotary Club, Charter Member/President
- Hosanna Lutheran Church, Lakeville – Member
- High School and Collegiate Mock Trial Judge
- Eastview High School Mock Trial Team, Asst. Coach
- Dakota County Law Library, Bd. of Trustees (Lawyer member | Judge member)
- Burnsville Chamber of Commerce, member and Board of Directors
- ServeMinnesota, Inc., Board of Directors
- Burnsville Foundation, Board of Directors
- Apple Valley Chamber of Commerce, member
- Northern Dakota County Chamber of Commerce, member
- Legal Assistance of Dakota County, Ltd.,
Board of Directors | Board Chair
- Dakota County Technical College Foundation
Board of Directors
- Our Saviour's Shelter for the Homeless, Minneapolis
Board of Directors, Treasurer
- Arts Facility Task Force - City of Burnsville
- Judicial Juvenile Service Planning Committee - Dakota County
- Burnsville Jaycees, member
Board of Directors
- Minnesota Valley YMCA
Board of Directors
Chairman of the Board
- Valley Athletic Association, volunteer soccer coach

FAMILY

Married to Laurie Knutson, two adult children, six grandchildren.



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