

PRESS RELEASE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA

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**The Southern District of Indiana Celebrates Women’s History Month:
A Look Back on the Contributions of the Honorable Virginia Dill McCarty
and the Honorable Sarah Evans Barker**



*The Honorable Virginia Dill McCarty and the
Honorable Sarah Evans Barker*

INDIANAPOLIS (March 30, 2018) – Women’s History Month is observed each March to celebrate women’s contributions to history, culture, and society. The Southern District of Indiana has a rich history of women jurists and attorneys, including the Honorable Virginia Dill McCarty and the Honorable Sarah Evans Barker, pictured left.

Virginia Dill McCarty was the first woman appointed as United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana and the first woman nationally to be appointed to a full four-year term as U.S. Attorney when President Carter named her to the position in 1977. McCarty served as U.S Attorney from

1977 until 1981.

The distinction was one of many firsts in McCarty’s career. She graduated first in her class from the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis in 1950. She was the first woman nominated by a major party for a judgeship in Marion County in 1966, the first woman nominated as the Democratic candidate for Attorney General of Indiana in 1976, and, following her tenure as United States Attorney, the first woman from a major party to run for governor of Indiana in 1984. On her pioneering path, McCarty said, “My parents always told me to go out and do the best I could. . . I just didn’t know I wasn’t supposed to do those things.”

McCarty passed away in 2006. The Virginia Dill McCarty Papers were recently archived by the Indiana Historical Society. Learn more at <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/virginia-dill-mccarty-papers.pdf>.

Sarah Evans Barker’s contributions to the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana are profound and ongoing. Prior to becoming the first woman appointed to the federal

bench in Indiana, Judge Barker in 1972 became the first woman to serve as an assistant United States attorney in the Southern District of Indiana. Of her appointment to the position, Judge Barker recalled, “I knew that for other women coming along, it was going to make a difference if I screwed up.”

Nine years later, Judge Barker became the second woman to serve as United States Attorney in the district, directly following Virginia Dill McCarty. On Valentine’s Day, 1984, Judge Barker received a call from President Reagan informing her of his intent to nominate her as a United States District Judge for the Southern District of Indiana. “It was a very memorable moment,” she reflected in an interview. “You hope you don’t say something crazy or stupid that will make him rescind the appointment. I said I hoped I’d never disappoint him.” She was confirmed by the Senate and received her commission just a month later.

After serving as District Judge for thirty years, including seven years as Chief Judge, Judge Barker took senior status in 2014. She continues to carry a significant caseload and provide critical service to the district, which remains the second busiest in the nation by weighted caseload. Judge Barker is an active, integral, and revered part of the Court family, and a key figure in women’s history in Indiana.

For more on Judge Barker’s career, see https://www.nuvo.net/cultural_vision_awards/lifetime-achievement-judge-sarah-evans-barker/article_194b5cf6-30f7-11e7-aa42-eb69f863ecf5.html and <https://www.indianapolismonthly.com/news-opinion/sustained/>.