



**SUPREME COURT
THE JUDICIARY
REPUBLIC OF PALAU**

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Associate Justice R. Barrie Michelsen retires on April 4, 2019



The Palau Judiciary announces that Associate Justice R. Barrie Michelsen will retire on April 4, 2019. Justice Michelsen has diligently served the Judiciary for years as both a Trial Justice and an Appellate Justice.

Justice R. Barrie Michelsen came to Micronesia as an attorney many years ago, first to Guam, then FSM and in 1996, he was appointed Associate Justice of the Palau Supreme Court. He resigned in 2005 to go into private practice in Hawaii. After several years there, he and his wife Chris retired and relocated to California where their two sons and first grandchild were and still are.

Justice Michelsen came back to the Judiciary in 2016. It was a busy year. The implementation of the 14th Constitutional Amendment was in full force. The former constitutional structure of the Supreme Court consisted of a Chief Justice and three Associate Justices. All served as Trial Justices, and for an appeal from a Justice, the other three sat as the appellate panel members. The constitutional amendment changed this structure to a traditional one where Trial Justices and Appellate Justices are separated and no longer sit on each other's appeals.

During this transition from the former Supreme Court to the new one, an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court resigned. The Judicial Nominating commission within the Judiciary went to work immediately. The Judicial Nominating Commission interviewed Barrie in 2016 for the vacancy with the new Supreme Court. He informed the Commission that if he got the position, he would only serve two to three years. President Remengesau Jr. appointed him, and R. Barrie Michelsen took office as Associate Justice of the Appellate Division on October 28, 2016.

During the transition to the new Supreme Court structure, a backlog of appeals began building up and on the effective date of the new Supreme Court on January 15, 2016, the backlog was the worst in recent years, reaching near crisis levels. Even into 2017 it took the appellate division an average of 187 days to issue opinions. In 2018, the average was down to 83 days, a good performance rating by any standard.

The Judiciary credits Justice Michelsen as an important contributor in the Judiciary's efforts to improve its efficiency. He was the right person in the Judiciary's time of need. We thank you, Barrie, and wish you and Chris the best as you resume your retirement.