Justice Robert Benahm Awards for Community Service

CRITERIA & ELIGIBILITY 2027

(as approved by the Supreme Court of Georgia September 10, 2025)

Each year the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism, in conjunction with the State Bar of Georgia, invites nominations for the Justice Robert Benham Awards for Community Service. A wide net is cast, as nominees are solicited from around the State of Georgia and from all ten judicial districts. Any person who is not a member of the Selection Committee may submit a nomination, including members of the public, bar leaders, and fellow legal practitioners. The Selection Committee will no longer accept nominations from individuals who are nominating themselves. The Selection Committee, consisting of members of the bar and the public, receives nominations, conducts confidential deliberations, and selects award recipients from eligible nominees who meet the award criteria.

The Selection Committee generally believes that community or public service is not service to the bar; however, community service can be done through bar-sponsored or related activities or projects. Judges' service must not be merely doing their judicial tasks, but must be service outside of their official duties. Normally, the award is not given to persons who have served a single cause or single-purpose organization, but to those who have made wide contributions to a variety of causes outside of their professional practice or judicial service.

General Criteria. Judges and lawyers meet the criteria for these awards if they have combined a professional career with outstanding service and dedication to their communities through voluntary participation in community organizations, government-sponsored activities, or humanitarian work ***outside of their professional practice or judicial service.*** Contributions may be made in any field, including but not limited to: social service, education, faith-based efforts, sports, recreation, the arts, or politics.

Lifetime Achievement Award Criteria: The Lifetime Achievement Award is the highest recognition given by the Justice Robert Benham Awards for Community Service Selection Committee. This award recognizes a judge or a lawyer who, in addition to meeting the criteria for receiving the Justice Robert Benham Award for Community Service, has demonstrated an extraordinarily long and distinguished commitment to volunteer participation in the community throughout his or her legal career.

Eligibility Requirements: Nominees must:

1) Be a member of the State Bar of Georgia, in good standing, or have been a member, in good standing, at the time of death;
2) Have made a significant and meaningful commitment of time and energy over time to at least one and ideally multiple community organizations that has made a difference to the public served by those organizations;
3) Have made contributions that are worthy of tribute and recognition from the perspective of the nominee's local Georgia community and the contributions could encourage other Georgia Bar members to provide their own volunteer and civic services;
4) Not be a member of the Selection Committee, staff of the State Bar of Georgia or Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism; and
5) Not be a candidate in a contested judicial or political election at the time of the nomination until the time of the acceptance of the award.