

## UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

CEREMONIAL MISC. ORDER NO. 02-23

IN RE: THE RETIREMENT OF GREGORY O. BLOCK

Before BARTLEY, *Chief Judge*, and PIETSCH, GREENBERG, ALLEN, MEREDITH, TOTH, FALVEY, LAURER, and JAQUITH, *Judges*, and KRAMER, HOLDAWAY, GREENE, KASOLD, HAGEL, MOORMAN, LANCE, DAVIS, and SCHOELEN, *Senior Judges*.

### ORDER

Before the Court is the matter of the retirement of Gregory O. Block, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims' Clerk of Court and Executive Officer. Prior to being sworn in as Clerk on September 1, 2010, Mr. Block served with highest distinction in the United States Army for 30 years. Retiring as a colonel, Mr. Block, as a member of the Judge Advocate General's Corps, served as a senior legal advisor throughout the world, to include posts in the Republic of Korea, Germany, the Balkans, and Afghanistan. He concluded his notable military career as Dean of the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School.

Since joining the Court, Mr. Block has consistently stewarded the Court's operations and improved the Court's ability to fulfill its mission. He not only served five Chief Judges during his 13-year tenure, he also collaborated with them and the entire Board of Judges to shape and shepherd the Court through a period of tremendous challenge and change. His contributions are too countless to name, but he was instrumental in guiding Court operations to manage a doubling caseload; accommodating the statutory expansion of the Court's bench to include two additional active Judges; implementing and supporting the recall of Senior Judges on a regular basis; ensuring judicial security; and budgeting for and increasing staff capacity to support a burgeoning caseload. He oversaw expansion and reallocation of the Court's physical space to accommodate growth and change, including the creation of the library and conference space, and supervised the courtroom renovation that culminated in the naming of the Frank Q. Nebeker Courtroom. He never sought commendation, but instead saw his role as maintaining the Court's capacity to handle whatever came its way.

Along with actions by several Chief Judges, Mr. Block took measures essential to allowing the Court to seamlessly navigate the 2020 public health crisis. He was instrumental in developing a continuity of operations plan early on, and thereafter routinely emphasized the importance of real-life testing of the Court's ability to operate offsite. That critical preparation, along with a supremely talented IT department, allowed the Court to pivot to fully remote operations. Mr. Block was also vital in securing infrastructure that allowed the Court to livestream oral arguments and to transition to fully remote and hybrid proceedings, creating ongoing flexibility.

Mr. Block routinely sought ways to improve practice before the Court, and his rapport with practitioners fostered innovation. He worked hand in hand with the Court's Rules Advisory Committee (RAC), assisting the RAC to address class actions and spearheading the Rule 33 pilot program in partnership with the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program. A founding member and first chairman of the Court's Judicial Advisory Committee, he helped shape that group's priorities and worked with members on initiatives that furthered the Court's mission.

Mr. Block is recognized for his superb service as a dedicated, loyal, selfless, and distinguished public servant who leads by example in everything he does. His accomplishments will endure and reflect great credit upon him and the Court. Upon consideration of the foregoing, and as he departs to enjoy retirement, it is

ORDERED that Gregory O. Block will take with him our admiration for his dedicated government career, our gratitude for the years of outstanding service he rendered to the Court, the warmth of our continued friendship, and our very best wishes.

DATED: September 29, 2023

PER CURIAM.