
The Passing of Retired Partner Steve Sachs

JANUARY 13, 2022

Steve Sachs, a lifelong Baltimorean who had a storied career in the law and retired from the firm in 1999, passed away on January 12 at the age of 87.

After Haverford College, the US Army and Yale Law School, Steve served as an assistant US attorney for the District of Maryland and then, at not yet 34, became the US attorney. While US attorney, Steve successfully tried the case of the Catonsville Nine, which involved nine anti-Vietnam War activists who broke into a local draft board, seized the files and burned them. The case was controversial then and now, but Steve's commitment to it never wavered. Fifty years later, he wrote that, however justified the protest, "the rule of law and the democratic value of humility have stronger claims to our reverence and respect."

After a stint in private practice, during which he represented former FBI director L. Patrick Gray in connection with the Watergate scandal, Steve was twice elected attorney general of Maryland. He served in that role from 1979 to 1987, successfully arguing three cases in the US Supreme Court and becoming widely recognized as a progressive, good-government attorney general. He ran for governor of Maryland in 1986, at which time, as he liked to say, "the voters decided that I should return to private practice." That was our good fortune, as Steve became a partner of then–Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, traveling each day from his home in Baltimore to the DC Office. Steve was an elegant writer, a powerful advocate and an extremely accomplished trial lawyer. He was a generous partner, colleague and mentor. He taught a generation of lawyers how to write a brief, take a deposition and try a case. He also made time to read widely and improve his French, and he had a keen, compassionate sense of humor. He was a mensch.

Since his retirement in 1999, Steve remained active in handling pro bono cases, affiliating with the Public Justice Center in Baltimore, and accepting varied public appointments, such as leading the investigation, at the request of Maryland Governor O'Malley in 2008, into certain actions of the Maryland State Police. And he was a revered and engaged elder statesman in the realm of Maryland politics. In recent years, Steve contributed numerous opinion pieces to the *Baltimore Sun* and elsewhere, such as [Your Daily Journal](#).

Due to the pandemic, a public event celebrating Steve's life will be deferred until later this spring.