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Spotlighting Public Service: Alumni Serve Their Home State

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Alumni serve their home state

Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice **Patrick Wyrick**

OU LAW CLASS OF 2007



Photo by Erin McGregor, Legislative Service Bureau

Patrick Robert Wyrick was born in March 1981 to Bob and Sharon Wyrick of Atoka, Oklahoma, where the family owned and operated Wyrick Lumber Company. He grew up in the small southeastern Oklahoma community and in 1999, graduated from Atoka High School after earning a reputation as a baseball pitcher with a strong throwing arm.

In high school, Wyrick fielded scholarship offers from numerous Division I schools, was drafted by the Montreal Expos and ultimately signed with the University of Oklahoma Sooners. In his sophomore year, Wyrick spent a semester at Cowley County Community College in Arkansas City, Kansas, before enrolling at Oklahoma City University for his junior season, where he helped the team to the NAIA National Championship game before signing a professional contract with the Florida Marlins.

Wyrick loved playing at the professional level, but the wear and tear on his arm from hurling baseballs since his youth caught up with him at the ripe old age of 22. While his baseball career ended sooner than he hoped, Wyrick knew what he wanted to do next.

As a student at Atoka High School, he had been involved with the speech and debate program, and had participated in the Oklahoma Mock Trial Competition of the Oklahoma Bar Association. The Atoka High School team won the state championship his junior and senior years.

As a senior, Wyrick received the best lawyer award at the National High School Mock Trial Championship. This national award, combined with words of encouragement from former Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Marian Opala, who had presided over the state championship trial, helped Wyrick realize that at the conclusion of his baseball career, he wanted to attend law school.

Wyrick returned to OU, completed his undergraduate degree in sociology and criminology in 2004 and began law school. After earning his juris doctor in 2007, he worked in Muskogee, Oklahoma, as a law clerk for the chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Oklahoma. When the clerkship ended, he became an associate of GableGotwals in Oklahoma City, practicing general civil litigation.

In 2011, Wyrick began working in the office of the Oklahoma attorney general as the state's first solicitor general, the chief appellate lawyer for the state, where he argued cases in Oklahoma Supreme Court, 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, United States Supreme Court, and other state and federal courts.

He served in that position until February 2017, when he was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Justice Steven Taylor ('74).

In November, the White House announced that Wyrick was on its short list of candidates to fill the next vacancy on the United States Supreme Court.



Justice Patrick Wyrick stands at his swearing-in reception with former Justice Steven Taylor ('74), who previously held the District No. 2 position on the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

Photo by Joseph French, AOC

Oklahoma Attorney General
Mike Hunter

OU LAW CLASS OF 1982



Michael James "Mike" Hunter was born in Enid, Oklahoma, in July 1956, to parents Chester and Phyllis Hunter, and grew up on a farm in Garfield County. He attended and graduated from Pioneer-Pleasant Vale Schools.

Hunter enrolled at Oklahoma State University, where he was active in student government and served in leadership roles in multiple organizations. He was recognized by the OSU Alumni Association as one of the "Top 5 Senior Men" and in May 1978, he received a bachelor's degree in history.

He applied and was accepted to the OU College of Law, but chose to defer entering law school for a year to work on a gubernatorial campaign. In reflecting on his decision to delay his legal education to be involved in the political campaign, Hunter said his experience working on the campaign only served to intensify his resolve to practice law.

Hunter started law school in 1979, served as president of the Student Bar Association as a 3L and graduated in 1982.

Hunter practiced law in Oklahoma City, focusing on energy and real estate law. He was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives and served from 1985 until 1990, when he returned to private practice. Hunter served as the general counsel of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission from 1993 to 1994. He was the Republican nominee for the office of Oklahoma attorney general in 1994.



The Hunter family (left to right): Brock, Cheryl, Mike, Rachael and Barrett

In 1995, Hunter became chief of staff for Oklahoma Congressman J.C. Watts, managing offices in Washington, D.C., Norman and Lawton, Oklahoma. He served in that capacity until 1999, when he was appointed secretary of state by Gov. Frank Keating, returning his public service focus to the state level. He resigned from that position in 2002 to become the executive vice president and chief operating officer for the American Council of Life Insurers, the advocacy, legal and research division of the life insurance industry.

Hunter was appointed secretary of the Commissioners of the Oklahoma Land Office in August 2009. In 2011, he became chief operating officer of the American Bankers Association, a position he held for four years.

Hunter was named first assistant in the Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General in 2015, and the following year was appointed to serve for a second time as Oklahoma's secretary of state, with the additional responsibilities of being special counsel to the governor. It was while serving in these positions that Hunter was appointed to serve as the attorney general in February 2017.

Hunter is married to Cheryl Plaxico Hunter ('82), who practices in Oklahoma City and previously served as a member of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The couple has two adult sons, Barrett Hunter ('17), who is married to Rachael, and Brock Hunter. |SL|