

The Honorable Mattielyn B. Williams Recently Featured on Close Up Radio

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[EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- The Honorable Mattielyn B. Williams, Tennessee's first African American administrative judge and a lifelong advocate for justice and equity, is receiving well-deserved recognition for a decades-long career dedicated to public service, fairness, and legal reform. Recently featured by the Wall Street Journal, Judge Williams's story demonstrates the difference one woman can make in the legal landscape through thoughtful leadership and genuine commitment to fairness.

Growing up with an initial interest in medicine, Williams pivoted to law during her undergraduate studies after discovering her passion for helping people and problem-solving. "I was interested in law for its potential to help people. Whether that's always realized today is another question, but the potential remains—and that's what drew me in," she explains.



Williams's legal career began with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, where her work was focused on desegregating public universities and community colleges, striving to enhance opportunities for students, faculty, and staff, across racial lines. She also addressed the licensing of proprietary schools, giving her early exposure to advocacy and regulatory decisions. Her appointment as Tennessee's first African American administrative judge marked a historic moment, championed by Speaker Pro Tempore Lois D. Berry and then-Secretary of State Riley Darnell. Williams credits this milestone to the importance of relationships and mentorship in advancing professional opportunities, particularly for women and minorities in the legal profession.

Throughout her tenure as a judge, Williams presided over complex cases, including health facility expansions and medical licensure reviews, often involving sensitive public safety issues. She recounts a memorable case regarding a dentist who, after serving prison time for a serious offense, sought to regain his license without oversight. “The board and I agreed that supervision was necessary if he were to practice at all,” Williams states. “It reminded me that fairness cannot come at the expense of public safety, and that hearings should not be abused as a means to circumvent responsibility.”

Williams also found meaningful examples of fairness in cases related to TennCare, Tennessee’s Medicaid program. These hearings provided citizens the chance to appeal denied medical services, ensuring their voices and those of their physicians were heard. “I saw a lot of fairness in the TennCare arena—individuals advocating for medically necessary services, with each side given an opportunity to present their case. That’s how the process should work.”

Her journey was not without its personal hurdles. Williams admits that, early in her career, she did not view herself as a litigator, often working more behind the scenes on administrative and rule-making tasks. A pivotal moment came when she was called to argue a significant case before the Higher Education Commission, a challenge she embraced and overcame, building resilience and self-assurance that would serve her throughout her judicial career.

As a lifelong advocate for civil rights, Williams has dedicated time post-retirement to causes close to her heart, particularly the widespread issue of voting rights restoration. Tennessee has one of the highest rates of disenfranchisement for former inmates, a fact that troubles Williams deeply. “Once you’ve served your time, it should be over in terms of adverse situations in your life. But in Tennessee, that’s not the case. I feel strongly that we need to address these injustices.”

Her reflections extend to broader issues within the American penal system. Williams points out the challenges faced by public defenders, the inequities experienced by minorities and the differently abled, and the vital role of organizations like the Innocence Project, in correcting miscarriages of justice. “The system is supposed to be just, but that is not always the case. Some of the underlying problems are financial inequities that translate into unequal access to legal resources,” she observes.

Williams’s advice to women aspiring to leadership in law is both practical and encouraging: “Practice, practice, practice. Know that you may have to work harder and longer than your male colleagues, but see it as an opportunity to become better. Others have paved the way; now it’s your turn to take the ball further and make a real difference.”

In her retirement, Williams continues her involvement with the NAACP at both the national and local levels and is active with organizations such as the National Organization for Action and Hope (NOAH) and her church’s justice ministries. “I’m busier now than I was as a judge,” she laughs, “but it’s fulfilling to contribute toward positive change for more people.”

Judge Williams's legacy is one of thoughtful leadership, compassion, and the consistent pursuit of fairness. Her story serves as a call to current and future generations to work toward a legal system that truly serves all people.

Close Up Radio recently featured The Honorable Mattielyn B. Williams in a two-part interview with Jim Masters on Tuesday November 18th at 3pm EST and with Doug Llewelyn on Tuesday November 25th at 3pm EST

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For more information about The Honorable Mattielyn B. Williams, please visit <https://www.24-7pressrelease.com/press-release/527187/mattielyn-b-williams-featured-in-the-wall-street-journal/>

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