

Roderick L. Ireland is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court. A native of Springfield, Massachusetts, he received his Bachelor of Arts from Lincoln University; Juris Doctor from Columbia Law School; Master of Laws from Harvard Law School; and Doctor of Philosophy in Law, Policy, and Society from Northeastern University. Chief Justice Ireland began his legal career in 1969 as a Neighborhood Legal Services attorney, then worked as a public defender with the Roxbury Defenders Committee, as chief attorney, deputy director, and executive director. He was Assistant Secretary and Chief Legal Counsel for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Administration and Finance, and Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Appeal on Motor Vehicle Liability Policies and Bond.

Chief Justice Ireland has been a jurist for more than thirty-four years, serving as a judge of the Juvenile Court from 1977 to 1990, after which he was appointed an Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Appeals Court (1990-1997). He was first appointed as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court in 1997, by Governor William F. Weld. He became the Senior Associate Justice in 2008. In 2010, he was appointed as the thirty-sixth Chief Justice by Governor Deval Patrick and was sworn in on December 20. Chief Justice Ireland has been an adjunct faculty member at Northeastern University since 1978, and on the faculty of the Appellate Judges Seminar at New York University Law School since 2001. He is the author of the Juvenile Law volume of Thomson/West Publishing's Massachusetts Practice Series, the second edition of which was published in 2006, as well as law review articles. When he was appointed to the Supreme Judicial Court in 1997, he was the first African-American Justice in its then 305 year history and now serves as its first African-American Chief Justice.