

**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA**

**EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT**

**At Charleston**

**A PROCLAMATION**

**By the Governor**

**WHEREAS**, the Honorable Judge John T. Copenhaver Jr., was born in Charleston, West Virginia on September 29, 1925, to John T. Copenhaver Sr., and Ruth Cherrington; and

**WHEREAS**, Judge Copenhaver was educated at the Kentucky Military Institute, and served as a medic in the United States Army from 1944 to 1946, attending the wounded in the Pacific campaigns of World War II and rising to the rank of sergeant; and

**WHEREAS**, afterwards, he attended West Virginia University and the West Virginia University College of Law, earning his law degree in 1950; and

**WHEREAS**, Judge Copenhaver dedicated his life to public service—beginning his professional legal career as a clerk from 1950 to 1951 for the Honorable Judge Benjamin Franklin Moore of the United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, afterward, Judge Copenhaver worked in private practice for several years before being appointed by Judge Moore as a bankruptcy referee for the Southern District of West Virginia—a position he served in from 1958 to 1973 when that title was changed by Act of Congress from referee to United States Bankruptcy Judge; and

**WHEREAS**, Judge Copenhaver served as a United States Bankruptcy Judge for the Southern District of West Virginia from 1973 to 1976; and

**WHEREAS**, during this time, Judge Copenhaver served as President of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges and played a key role in drafting elements of the Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-598, 92 Stat. 2549 (Nov. 6, 1978)—one of the most significant overhauls of the insolvency laws of the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, Judge Copenhaver also served as an adjunct professor at the West Virginia University College of Law from 1970 to 1976; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1976, President Gerald Ford nominated Judge Copenhaver as a federal district court judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2018, Judge Copenhaver assumed senior status, but continued to carry a full caseload and preside over cases even through his 100th birthday; and

**WHEREAS**, Judge Copenhaver's devotion to public service remained steadfast throughout his nearly seven decades in the federal judiciary; and

**WHEREAS**, Judge Copenhaver was widely respected and admired throughout the judicial and legal community of the United States and the State of West Virginia even through his last days; and

**WHEREAS**, Judge Copenhaver passed away in Charleston on May 12, 2026, as the longest-serving federal judge in United States history; and

**WHEREAS**, the citizens of the State of West Virginia, friends, colleagues, and associates of Judge Copenhaver desire to recognize his lifetime of public service to the United States and the State of West Virginia, and to acknowledge his valuable contributions to the Nation and State.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, PATRICK MORRISEY**, by virtue of the authority vested in me as the Governor of the State of West Virginia, do hereby **ORDER** that, in commemoration of

the distinguished life and service of the Honorable John T. Copenhaver Jr., the United States and West Virginia State flags displayed at the Capitol Complex in Charleston, West Virginia, and at all State facilities throughout the State of West Virginia, be lowered to half-staff beginning at sunset on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, and to remain there until sunset on Wednesday, May 20, 2026.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the great seal of the State of West Virginia to be affixed.

**DONE** at the Capitol in the City of Charleston, State of West Virginia, this the Thirteenth Day of May, in the Year of our Lord, Two Thousand Twenty-Six, and in the One Hundred Sixty-Third Year of the State.



**By the Governor**

*Patrick Morissey*  
**GOVERNOR**

*Krist Warner*  
**SECRETARY OF STATE**