

Chief Judge John R. Tunheim
United States District Court | District of Minnesota

Chief Judge John R. Tunheim has served as a United States District Judge in the District of Minnesota for nearly twenty-five years after being nominated by President Clinton and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 1995. He has served as Chief Judge of the mid-sized district since 2015. From 1994-1998, Judge Tunheim served as Chair of the U.S. Assassination Records Review Board, a federal agency that declassified the remaining secret records of the assassination of President Kennedy. Before his appointment as a judge, he served as Minnesota's Chief Deputy Attorney General, where he argued three cases at the U.S. Supreme Court, and earlier, as Staff Assistant to U.S. Senator Hubert H. Humphrey and Law Clerk for U.S. District Judge Earl Larson. He has devoted much of his judicial career to helping develop the rule of law in new democracies, including drafting the Kosovo Constitution and helping to develop a much-improved legal system in Uzbekistan. He has worked extensively on assisting countries in developing better responses to terrorism trials, primarily in South Asia. Chief Judge Tunheim served for four years as the Chair and ten years as a Member of the U.S. Judicial Conference Committee on Court Administration and Case Management. He is currently a member of the Judicial Conference of the United States.

He is a graduate of Concordia College and the University of Minnesota Law School, where he served as President of the Law Review. He has served as Chair of the Concordia College Board of Regents and Chair of Advisory Council at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. The University of Minnesota honored Judge Tunheim in 2010 with its Outstanding Achievement Award. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the CEELI Institute in Prague and a member of the Executive Committee of the Criminal Justice Section of the American Bar Association.

He is a fourth generation descendant of Norwegian immigrants and was raised in the northwestern Minnesota farming village of Newfolden. He is married to Kathy Tunheim, CEO of Tunheim, a communications firm in the Twin Cities, father to Liz Tunheim Sheets, a Vice President at Tunheim, and Sam Tunheim, a lawyer at Dorsey and Whitney in Minneapolis, and grandfather to Isabel Starr Sheets, a bright and beautiful first-grader.