

**Charles E. Springer – Democrat, Appointed
24th Nevada Attorney General
July 16, 1962—January 7, 1963**

Biography

Attorney General Charles Edward Springer served the shortest term of any of Nevada's Attorneys General included in this publication, slightly more than six months in office. His predecessor, Roger D. Foley resigned as Nevada Attorney General after being appointed to the federal district court bench. In 1962, Governor Grant Sawyer appointed Springer as Attorney General. He promised Governor Sawyer that as a condition of his appointment, he would not file for Attorney General at the end of his term. Springer kept his promise and did not file for reelection.

Native Nevadan, Charles Springer was born February 20, 1928 in Reno, Nevada to Edwin and Rose Kelly Springer. His father died in Springer's infancy, and his widowed mother, a native of Goldfield, Nevada, was employed by the U.S. Government. During her long career, she traveled the county working for different commanding generals in the U.S. Army. She retired as the executive secretary to the commanding officer of Herlong Army Ordinance Depot. As a consequence, his beloved grandparents, William A. Kelly and the former Mary Connolly for the most part raised Springer. Before his birth in 1921, the family moved back to Reno at the end of President Woodrow Wilson's term. His grandfather had been appointed by the President as the Western States Director of the Internal Revenue Service stationed in San Francisco. Upon return to Reno, Kelly became the only bailiff in the Washoe County Courthouse. During Charles' youth, he often visited his grandfather in the courtroom and felt comfortable with the court personnel, perhaps influencing him in later years to become a lawyer.



Springer's education began in Reno at Mount Rose Elementary School, followed by Billingshurst Junior High School. Then, he attended St. Joseph's College, a Catholic Seminary in Mountain View, California, where he feels that the education he received at the college started his thirst for learning. From his early childhood, his heart was always with the poor, the underprivileged and those discriminated against by others. He claims that St. Joseph's helped instill these values that he carried into his adult life and career. After several years at St. Joseph's, in 1945, he returned to Reno and graduated from Reno High School. While at Reno High School, Springer participated in Track, became the State Champion sprinter, and was also a member of the Reno High Football team.

As a senior in high school, he enlisted at age 17 in the U.S. Army at the height of World War II. When the war ended, Springer was assigned to Japan in the Occupation Forces, where he served as a paratrooper in the 11th Airborne Division. After his honorable

discharge, he returned to Reno and enrolled at the University of Nevada and joined the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity.

At the University, he continued being a champion sprinter in all contests he ran. He was also on the football team. Springer was one of few athletes qualified to become a member of the National Athletic Fraternity, Sigma Delta Psi. Members of this fraternity possessed athletic abilities in sports other than football and running. They were required to meet certain standards in broad jump, high jump, javelin, swimming, and gymnastics.

While at the University of Nevada, Springer had the “good fortune”, as he describes it, to meet Jacqueline Sirkegian, a Native Nevadan from White Pine County. They were married in 1951. As Springer expressed, “We are in our 68th year of a very happy marriage.” Jacqueline’s father Paul, a mining executive with Consolidated Copper Mines at Kimberly, Nevada, graduated from the University of Nevada, Mackay School of Mines in 1924. Sirkegian served in the Army Air Force in World War I, and in 1942 the voters elected him to the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada.

Graduating from college with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Springer received a ROTC commission as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve in 1950. The couple moved to Washington, D.C., where Springer attended Georgetown Law School. The Springers, throughout his law school days, were employed by Nevada’s two Senators. Charles worked for Senator Pat McCarran, Democrat; and his wife, Jacqueline, worked for Senator George “Molly” Malone, Republican, in an office across the hall in the Senate Office Building.

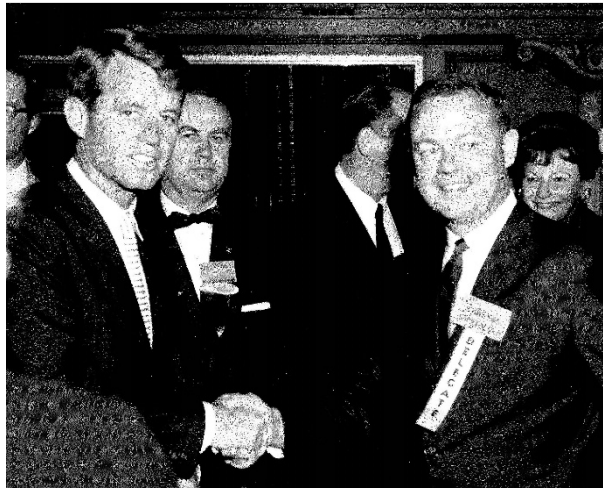
In 1953, Springer received his Bachelor of Laws (L.L.B.) and was admitted to practice law in the District of Columbia. On his return to Reno in 1953, after passing the Nevada Bar Exam, he was admitted to the Nevada Bar. He has been licensed to practice law for 65 years. He began his law career as an associate with the Reno Law Firm, Drendel and Dixon. Shortly thereafter, he was invited to serve as the law clerk to the only U.S. District Judge in Nevada (at that time), Roger T. Foley. Foley’s jurisdiction covered the entire state of Nevada, so Springer and the judge frequently traveled between Reno and Las Vegas.

At the end of this valuable clerkship, Springer formed a law partnership with Howard McKissick Jr., later Speaker of the State Assembly and Proctor Hug, Jr., later Chief Judge of the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In 1954, the partners developed and taught *The Nevada Bar Review Course*. As part of Springer’s law practice, he also served as the City Attorney for the city of Gabbs, Nevada.

In those early years as an attorney, he also worked as a Legislative Bill Drafter for the Nevada State Legislature under Russell McDonald, and Governor Grant Sawyer appointed Springer as his legal advisor for several years.

Springer devoted his legal career to righting wrongs and mistreatment of others. For example, he represented Dr. Ben Hazard, one of the first African-American professors at the University of Nevada, when he was denied housing in Reno. Springer successfully arranged for housing for Hazard.

Active in the state Democratic Party, Springer served as the Washoe County Party Chairman, the State Party Chairman, and as the Party's National Committeeman. In 1962, he received a National award as an "Outstanding Young Democrat."



Left Front: Bobby Kennedy, Right Front: Charles Springer

In 1970, Springer filed for Governor as an Independent, liberal reformer, and antiwar candidate. However, leaders in the Democratic Party obtained a lower court order striking his name from the ballot. Although the Nevada Supreme Court reinstated Springer's candidacy, it was shortly before balloting and, of course, too late for him to conduct a successful campaign. He lost in the general election.

From 1973 to 1980, Springer served as the Juvenile Court Master for the Second Judicial District Court for the State of Nevada, a recognized expert in the juvenile justice field.¹ In 1979, Springer formed the John Shaw Field Foundation, dedicated to helping juveniles in need of assistance. He continues to serve as President of that Foundation.

In 1980, Springer successfully ran for the Nevada Supreme Court, Seat E. He estimates he met more than 50,000 people face-to-face to win and to off-set his mere \$100,000 budget for the primary and general elections.

After Springer was elected to the Nevada Supreme Court, he attended the Graduate Program for American Judges at Oriel Collect, Oxford University in Oxford, England and received a Master of Laws (L.L.M.) in Judicial Process from the University of Virginia.

In 1985, Springer was one of the few male members on the Nevada Commission for Women. He also headed a Nevada Supreme Court study on gender bias in the judiciary, and he recommended [and the court agreed to] study racial discrimination in the states' judicial system.²

¹ <https://lasvegassun.com/news/1998/jan/05/springer-becomes-chief-justice/>. January 5, 1998.

² Ibid, Page 3. Accessed May 10, 2018.

When the voters reelected him in 1986 and 1992, Springer had no opposition. He served 18 years on the court, and after serving twice as the Chief Justice, he retired in 1999.

During his time on the bench, he advocated for and recommended the Legislature approve and create an Intermediate Appellate Court of Appeals. In 2014, the people finally voted to create this court.

Springer served on the faculty of a number of schools, including the National College of Juvenile and Family Law in Reno; the National Judicial College in Reno; the adjunct Faculty at McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific in Sacramento (Juvenile Law); and the University of Nevada, Reno (Business Law); Visiting Professor, University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, People's Republic of China.

Springer, a prolific writer, published among others, the following articles: *Justice for Juveniles*, U.S. Department of Justice in April 1986; *Rehabilitating the Juvenile Court*, Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy in 1991; *Nevada Women's Legal Guide* (co-authored with Paula Quagliana), Nevada Commission for Women in 1995; and contributed to the Advisory to the American Law Institute on *Principles of the Law of Family Dissolution: Analysis and Recommendations* in 2000.

Some of Springer's awards include the following: the Outstanding Service Award from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; the Civil Libertarian of the Year Award from the Northern Nevada Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union; the University of Nevada Midby-Byron Distinguished Leadership Award; an Outstanding Community Service Award from the Washoe County Teachers Association; and an award from Who's Who in America; and Who's Who in American Law.

A few of Springer's professional and civic affiliations include membership in the Scholastic Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi; President of the English Linguistic Group; Chair of the Medical Malpractice Screening Panel; President of the National Association of Juvenile Court Judges Associates; Arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association; Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion; and member of the Board of Directors for the Nevada Art Gallery, among others.

After serving on the Nevada Supreme Court, Springer consulted with the Law Offices of Kermitt Waters in Reno on a variety of eminent domain and inverse condemnation cases. He also traveled to Italy for several years on an International Property Case.

Springer and his wife Jacqueline's family includes a daughter, Kelli Ann Springer Campbell, son-in-law, Attorney Richard Campbell and three grandchildren, Charles Tyler, Kelsey Cecelia, and Karina Ann Campbell.

General Election of 1970

On November 3, 1970, Springer ran for governor, as an Independent. Of the 147,006 votes cast, “Mike” O’Callaghan (Democrat) won the election with 70,697 votes (48%), to Ed Fike’s (Republican) 64,400 votes (44%), Charles Springer’s 6,479 votes (4%) and D.M. Hansen’s (Independent American) 5,415 votes (4%).³

Primary Election of 1974

In the September 3, 1974, nonpartisan election for the Nevada Supreme Court, of the 106,211 votes cast, Gordon Thompson received 45,640 (42%) votes to Springer’s 40,255 (38%) votes; James H. Phillips’ 15,090 (14%) votes and Leonard Root’s 5,226 (5%) votes. Thompson and Springer advanced to the general election.⁴

General Election of 1974

On November 5, 1974, Springer faced Justice Gordon Thompson for the nonpartisan seat on the Nevada Supreme Court. Of the 155,214 votes cast, Gordon Thompson won 80,607 (52%) votes to Springer’s 74,507 (48%) votes.⁵

Primary Election of 1980

On September 9, 1980, Springer won the nonpartisan primary nomination for the Nevada Supreme Court, Seat E. Of the 122,097 votes cast, Springer received 37,509 (31%) votes to Paul Goldman’s 28,255 (23%) votes; George Franklin’s 25,742 (21%) votes; Clinton Wooster’s 23,068 (19%) votes; and “None of these candidates” 7,523 (6%) votes.⁶

General Election of 1980

On November 4, 1980, Springer won the election for Nevada Supreme Court, Seat E. Of the 234,306 votes cast, Springer received 112,636 votes (48%); to Paul Goldman’s 106,659 (46%) votes; and “None of these candidates” 15,011 votes (6%).⁷

General Election of 1986

On November 4, 1986, Springer was reelected to the Nevada Supreme Court, Seat E. Of the 230,553 votes cast, Springer received 191,026 (83%) votes to “None of these candidates” 39,527 (17%) votes.⁸

General Election of 1992

³ *Political History of Nevada*, 2006, Page 395.

⁴ *Ibid*, Page 446.

⁵ *Ibid*, Page 398.

⁶ *Ibid*, Page 449.

⁷ *Ibid*, Page 402.

⁸ *Ibid*, Page 408.

On November 3, 1992, Springer was reelected to the Nevada Supreme Court, Seat E. Of the 433,918 votes cast, Springer received 322,855 (74%) votes to “None of these candidates” 111,063 (26%) votes.⁹

Office Administration and Duties

The Nevada Attorney General’s operating budget for the July 1, 1962—June 30, 1963, state fiscal period was as follows:

\$105,800	For the support of the Office of the Attorney General. Salary of the Attorney General of \$15,000 is included in this appropriation. ¹⁰ The 1961 State Legislature removed the Nevada Attorney General as <i>ex officio</i> Director of the Department of Highways.
\$10,000	For the Special Account of the Attorney General
\$40,000	Colorado River Intervention Action

⁹ *Political History of Nevada*, 2006, Page 413.

¹⁰ “. . . from and after the expiration of the present term of the Attorney General, his successor and successors in office thereafter shall receive an annual salary of \$17,000. . .” (Statutes of Nevada, 1961, Chapter 189, Section 4, Page 306).