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Letter: History was made in Judge Wolf's courtrooms

Admin // November 14, 2025 // 2 Minute Read

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To the editor:

I have had the honor of representing defendants in the federal court for our district for over 50 years. Amongst the most cherished experiences I have had was the representation of a significant number of clients in highly charged and highly challenging cases in the courtroom of the Honorable Mark Wolf, some in Courtroom 5 of the old federal court at Post Office Square and since 1998 in Courtroom 10 of the Seaport's Moakley Federal Courthouse.

I was an eyewitness to Judge Wolf's courage, extraordinary work ethic and relentless tenacity during the lengthy FBI misconduct hearings, where on virtually a daily basis the sordid partnership of Whitey Bulger, former FBI Special Agent John Connolly and other FBI agents working with Connolly to protect and to further Bulger's criminal enterprises were illuminated and then memorialized in an historic and devastating 661-page legal opinion by Judge Wolf (*U.S. v. Salemme*, 91 F.Supp. 2d 141).



Then, after a series of evidentiary hearings demonstrated that a federal strike force prosecutor failed to disclose a formal recantation of the lone witness in a RICO murder prosecution, Judge Wolf granted habeas relief commensurate with the proof as to the concealed exculpatory evidence (*Ferrara v U.S.*, 384 F. Supp. 2d 384), a decision fully affirmed by the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals (*Ferrara v U.S.*, 456 F.3d. 278).

Judge Wolf's bail opinion in *United States v. Patriarca* (776 F. Supp. 593) remains the go-to precedent for defense lawyers fighting detention motions based on the risk of danger to the community, even though it issued 34 years ago. And these are just a sampling of Judge Wolf's memorable imprint on the federal criminal law.

Judge Wolf was and is rightfully proud of his work in the Department of Justice with Attorney General Edward H. Levi and in the U.S. Attorney's Office with Bill Weld. He was a demanding jurist who expected AUSAs to meet the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, and he was just as tough on defense lawyers whose preparation and advocacy did not match what he expected, given the hallowed importance of federal criminal trials to our system of justice.



His [decision Friday to retire from the bench](#) and his [eloquent statement in The Atlantic](#) expressing his [rationale](#) for giving up a position he occupied for decades was consistent with his dedicated lifetime commitment to our District Court and more to our system of criminal justice, which is at the core of our democracy.

History was repeatedly made during trials in Judge Wolf's courtrooms. A Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly article sharing some of that rich history would be particularly rewarding for young attorneys who did not experience it firsthand, much of which now dates back 15, 20, 25 years and sometimes more.

Few trial judges author their own autobiographies. Given the many demands on Judge Wolf, we cannot count on his doing so, but it would be a loss for future trial lawyers for there not to not to be a series of in-depth interviews with Judge Wolf covering the many epic courtroom battles he presided over during his long tenure on the District Court.

Martin G. Weinberg
Boston

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- ☐ Yes, his language may fuel the idea that judges are motivated by a political agenda.
- ☐ No, he is calling needed attention to what he views as a crisis.

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