

About Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley

Attorney General Martha Coakley has dedicated the last 20 years of her life to a career in public service. Coakley has a strong history as an advocate—not only for individuals and communities, but also for the best interests of the Commonwealth at large. Coakley brings to the Attorney General’s office a diverse and extensive legal background, a proven track record of bringing people to the table to find effective solutions to the issues that face the Commonwealth, and a strong commitment to her role as a public servant.

Attorney General Coakley began her legal career in 1979, practicing civil litigation with the firm of Parker, Coulter, Daley & White and later at Goodwin Proctor LLP, both in Boston. While in civil practice, Coakley gained extensive experience in such areas as insurance defense, criminal defense, and large-scale construction litigation. She joined the Middlesex District Attorney’s Office in 1986, as an Assistant District Attorney in the Lowell District Court office. In 1987, Coakley was invited by the U.S. Justice Department to join its Boston Organized Crime Strike Force as a Special Attorney. She returned to the District Attorney’s Office in 1989, and in 1991 was appointed the Chief of the Child Abuse Prosecution Unit, during which time she investigated and prosecuted hundreds of cases of both physical and sexual abuse of children, including *Commonwealth v. Louise Woodward*. In December 1997, Coakley resigned her position to campaign for District Attorney in the 54 cities and towns of Middlesex.

In 1998, Coakley was elected Middlesex District Attorney. During her 8 years as District Attorney, Coakley established herself as a passionate advocate for public safety, not only bringing justice to crime victims and their families, but also emphasizing the importance of working with community leaders, schools, and law enforcement in a variety of diverse and multi-faceted prevention efforts. Under her leadership, the office’s Child Abuse Prosecution Unit continued to serve as a national model for victim-centered prosecution of crimes against children. Coakley was also responsible for extending that model to sexual crimes against adults, establishing the office’s Adult Sexual Assault Division in 2002. During her tenure as District Attorney, Coakley oversaw the successful prosecution of a number of high profile crimes, including the cases of several Catholic priests charged with sexually abusing children, the conviction of Michael McDermott on seven counts of first degree murder in connection with the workplace massacre at Edgewater Technologies in Wakefield, and the successful prosecution of Thomas Junta, the Reading father who fatally beat another parent at a youth hockey practice.

In January 2002, Attorney General Coakley completed a one-year term as the President of the Massachusetts District Attorney’s Association, where she was at the forefront of statewide public policy discussion and initiatives to improve the criminal justice system and enhance overall public safety. In recent years, she has continued to play an active role in advocating for legislative change on a variety of issues. Coakley joined with her fellow District Attorneys and other members of the public safety community in urging the Legislature to provide additional funding for the Massachusetts State Police Crime Lab for enhanced DNA analysis capabilities. She also joined Senate President Robert Travaglini in advocating for changes in the law streamline the approval process for academic and research institutions to conduct stem cell research.

Both during and prior to her tenure in public office, Attorney General Coakley has been involved in a number of community and professional organizations and boards. She is a former president of the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts, and has served on the Board of Directors at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. During her tenure as Middlesex District Attorney, Coakley served as the Chair of the Board of Directors of Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, Inc., a non-profit organization committed to providing prevention and intervention resources and training to Middlesex school districts and communities.

Throughout her career, Attorney General Coakley has been honored for her work by organizations such as the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and the Victim Rights Law Center. In 1998, she was named Woman of the Year by the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and in November 2000, the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts honored Coakley with its coveted Leila J. Robinson Award for her contributions to the field of law. In June 2002, the YWCA Boston selected Coakley as a member of its Academy of Women Achievers Class of 2002. In January 2004, District Attorney Coakley received the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce's Pinnacle Award for Excellence in Management in Government. And in May 2006, the Massachusetts Democratic Party with its prestigious Eleanor Roosevelt Award honored Coakley.

Attorney General Coakley regularly presents trainings and instruction at conferences and seminars, both in Massachusetts and nationwide. She has served as a guest lecturer for a number of colleges and universities, including Harvard University, Boston College Law School, and Tufts University. She has also served as a guest lecturer for organizations such as the Columbia Law Review, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, and the Massachusetts Medical Society. In January 2002, 2003, and 2006, she co-taught a winter study, "Law and Social Policy," at her alma mater, Williams College. Coakley taught criminal trial advocacy courses at the Massachusetts School of Law during the Fall 2003 semester, and at Boston University School of Law during the Spring 2006 and Spring 2007 semester.

Martha Coakley received a B.A. degree, cum laude, from Williams College in 1975, and a J.D. degree from the Boston University School of Law in 1979. Coakley resides in Medford, Massachusetts, with her husband, Thomas F. O'Connor, Jr. In her spare time, Coakley is an avid reader, and enjoys downhill skiing, walking her Labrador Retrievers, Jackson and Beauregard, and kayaking with her husband on the Mystic Lakes.