



Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York
Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

For Immediate Release
October 12, 2022

snpsc.org
[@snpsc](https://twitter.com/snpsc)

**Statement by Bridget G. Brennan on the Passing of Hon. Sterling Johnson, Jr.,
U.S. District Court Judge for the Eastern District of New York and Former
Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York**

We mourn the passing of Hon. Sterling Johnson, Jr., who was the visionary leader of this agency for 16 years, from 1975-1991. During his time at the helm of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office, the city was in the throes of a heroin epidemic, followed by a crack epidemic. As head of the office, Judge Johnson partnered with federal agencies and the New York City Police Department on successful investigations into members of "The Council," a notorious organized crime syndicate that controlled much of the heroin trade in New York City in the 1970s and early 80s. Judge Johnson developed a model of successful collaboration with federal, state, and local enforcement agencies that guides the work of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor to this day.

Prior to becoming Special Narcotics Prosecutor, Judge Johnson had a remarkable career. He grew up in Brooklyn, served as a Marine, joined the NYPD, where he rose to the rank of sergeant and carried out his duties while attending law school full time. He served as an Assistant United States Attorney, as Executive Director for the Civilian Complaint Review Board and as executive liaison officer to the DEA, before becoming Special Narcotics Prosecutor. He was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York in 1991, where he served for 31 years. He was a socially progressive force and a wise and fair jurist who treated all those who came before him with respect. He exhibited both compassion and strength while on the bench.

Judge Johnson was deeply interested in and supportive of the agency he led and derived great satisfaction from mentoring. He remained close with many of the people he worked with and reached out regularly to talk about major cases and issues. We could always count on Judge Johnson to offer wise counsel and bring a smile to our faces. We will miss him deeply.