

Jari Askins

Jari Askins has served the people of Oklahoma for more than 40 years in a variety of roles ranging from judge to legislator to lieutenant governor. Before coming to Cameron University, she served administrative director of the courts – the first woman to hold that position – where, under the supervision of the Chief Justice and the Oklahoma Supreme Court, she coordinated judicial operations and personnel throughout the state.

A native of Duncan, Askins earned her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Oklahoma and, in 1980, her Juris Doctorate from the OU College of Law. After receiving her law degree, she returned to Duncan and joined the law firm of Garvin, Bonney, Weaver and Corley where she concentrated on oil and gas law and title opinions for drilling sites and division orders.

Askins was elected to the Oklahoma Legislature in 1994, serving constituents in Stephens, Comanche and Cotton counties in House District 50 for a dozen years. During her final term, she became the first woman to lead a caucus in the Oklahoma Legislature when she was elected Democratic House Leader. She won statewide election as the state's 15th lieutenant governor in 2006, serving in that role until 2011.

When Askins was sworn in as lieutenant governor, she achieved the rare distinction of holding positions in all three branches of state government. She served as special judge for the District Court of Stephens County from 1982-1990 and was the first woman to serve as an officer in the Oklahoma Judicial Conference. In 1991, she was appointed to the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board, which elected her as its first woman chairman. She was also the first parole board member with prior judicial experience. She later served as executive director of the Pardon and Parole Board and deputy general counsel in the Office of the Governor. In 2014, Gov. Mary Fallin called upon Askins to again lead the Pardon and Parole Board by serving a second stint as the agency's interim executive director.

Askins later served as special adviser to the Governor on Child Welfare issues and Pinnacle Plan implementation. In that role, she worked with the Department of Human Services lending her leadership to the state's reform of the foster care system caring for deprived and neglected children.

Her higher education experience includes being as Associate Provost for External Relations at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, with the Stephenson Cancer Center as her primary focus. Upon the retirement of CU President John McArthur in early 2024, the OU Board of Regents selected her as the institution's interim president while it searched for a new leader.

President Askins serves on the boards of a number of organizations, including Duncan Regional Hospital, the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, and the Dean McGee Eye Institute Foundation. She also chairs the investment committee for the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence. She is a member of the First Christian Church in Duncan, where she still sings in the church choir.