



Metro & Tri-State

Transportation
Chicago Crime
60 years of history
Best of Chicago
Gov. Blagojevich
Roland Burris
Your Block
The R. Kelly trial
Made in Chicago
Missing in Chicago
Neighborhoods
Tony Rezko

Blogs

BackTalk
Lynn Sweet
Mary Mitchell
Neighborhoods
The Ride

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The Jerusalem Post
NBC5

News

Family Secrets
Today's news
Metro & Tri-State
Nation
World
Blogs
Chicagopedia
Commentary
Chicago Crime
Editorials
Education
Replacing Rahm
Lottery
Obituaries
Politics
Religion
Weather
Search for Stacy
Peterson
Special Sections
George Ryan Trial
Chats
City Hall
Hired Truck Scandal
Neighborhoods
Your Block
Mike Royko
Transportation

Columnists

Former State's Attorney Dick Devine adjusts to slower pace in private practice

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There's a little less excitement in Dick Devine's life these days.

He doesn't have to prosecute suspects charged in high-profile murder cases or deal with questions about his handling of cases.



Former Cook County State's Attorney Dick Devine still works long days, but now has more time for his eight grandchildren. "He's a real leader," a colleague at Meckler, Bulger, Tilson, Marick and Pearson says.

(John J. Kim/Sun-Times)

Still, shifting to private law practice wasn't easy at first, the former Cook County state's attorney says.

"You go through withdrawal," Devine, 65, said in an interview at the downtown offices of Meckler Bulger Tilson Marick & Pearson, where he has been handling white-collar criminal cases and commercial litigation since December. "The adrenaline level every day isn't quite what it is when you're an elected public official."

When he left his job as first assistant state's attorney to work in a private law firm in the mid-1980s, Devine said he felt the same pangs for the fast pace of the Criminal Courthouse at 26th and California.

This time, though, the adjustment was easier, Devine said, in part because he works alongside former colleagues from the state's attorney's office, including Jim Knibbs, who headed the office's Public Corruption and Financial Crimes Unit, and the firm's co-founder, Bruce Meckler, who recruited Devine after he announced he wouldn't seek re-election after more than a decade in office.

"We wanted Dick to join our firm in 1994 when we started it, but Dick wanted to run for public office at the time," Meckler said. "Dick Devine brings to the firm everything we need, which is great judgment, great maturity, great skills. He's a real leader."

Getting more chances to be with his eight grandchildren helped Devine decide not to seek re-election.

"The evenings are a little freer to drop in on grandchildren and harass our kids," the father of four said.

Devine still argues cases, works well past 5 p.m. and has accepted the responsibility of chairing a death penalty committee for the Chicago Bar Association and teaching a criminal law class at Loyola University.