

## James B. Vargason

At the age of 32, James B. Vargason became one of the youngest elected District Attorneys in New York State history. From 1992-2007, he served as District Attorney of Cayuga County - - the second longest serving DA in Cayuga County history. Raised in Cato NY, Jim was an all-star athlete in high school receiving 10 varsity letters. He was the youngest of five children, the only one to attend college. Jim paid for his entire college education by working during college, scholarships, and student loans, which he paid in full. Jim received his Bachelor's Degree from Rochester Institute of Technology and a law degree in 1986 from Syracuse University Law School. After law school, Jim practiced law in Auburn, New York. His first run for public office was in 1991 for District Attorney of Cayuga County. He won the race on the Republican and Pro-Life lines. He still grumbles about not receiving the Conservative Party endorsement that year, but he carried the Conservative Party banner in 1995, 1999, 2003, and 2006.

As a four-term District Attorney, Jim achieved one of the state's highest felony conviction rates, and secured guilty convictions in nearly every major felony crime category including: kidnapping, rape, conspiracy, scheme to defraud, robbery, white collar crime and murder. In fact, DA Vargason won every murder trial, and he had a near perfect record at the Appellate Division in Rochester where he defended the convictions he obtained. As DA, he served as the legal advisor to the grand jury and to all law enforcement agencies in Cayuga County. He led a prosecution team of six assistant prosecutors and eight legal support staff with an annual budget of 1.2 million. Jim had a reputation of being an excellent trial attorney, compassionate with crime victims, especially children, tough on criminals, and easy to work for. He did not believe the ends justified the means, and his fidelity to the law was indisputable. He never put politics ahead of doing what was right, and he never forgot that he worked for the citizens of Cayuga County. He was known as a straight shooter, who held firm to his conservative views, especially on law and order. He believed the guilty should be held accountable, and the innocent should not suffer.

DA Vargason was distinguished among his peers and was frequently called upon to share his knowledge of the law, and prosecution strategies. He taught other prosecutors and law enforcement officers on the laws of evidence, constitutional law, criminal procedure, and trial practice. He was selected to teach at the NY Prosecutor's Training Institute in Albany, served on the faculty at the National College of District Attorneys in Columbia, South Carolina teaching the art of cross-examination, lectured at the New York State Police Academy, and taught at the Central NY Police Academy on Constitutional issues, including Search and Seizure.

He was the first Cayuga County DA ever selected to a leadership position in the New York State District Attorneys Association, where he rose to be President during 2002-2003. During his tenure, he worked with law makers and Governor Pataki to craft criminal justice legislation to help keep citizens throughout New York State safe.

DA Vargason also created, and implemented first of their kind programs in Cayuga County providing services for victims of domestic and child abuse. He created and implemented first of their kind programs to crack down on violent felons, including an on-call ADA service that permitted police officers to call a prosecutor 24 hours a day, seven days a week to obtain legal advice to ensure that no legal loop hole during the investigation and arrest of violent felons could let a criminal walk on a legal technicality. DA Vargason also created "Operation Teen Proof" a program to prevent underage teenage purchases of alcohol. DA Vargason secured private funding to purchase for distribution to all merchants who sold alcohol in Cayuga County a handheld device to detect fake licenses used by teenagers to purchase alcohol. He also created a "Check Enforcement Program" to help businesses to fight against bad checks and to recover lost revenue from bad checks.

DA Vargason held a charity golf event nearly every year he was DA, and he donated the majority of the proceeds to charities in Cayuga County, including Crime Victim Services, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Hospice of the Finger Lakes, and the Salvation Army, to name a few.

DA Vargason's efforts, and initiatives while serving as District Attorney of Cayuga, made him a natural selection for this year's Torch award because he made our community a safer and better place to live. He was a great example of what it meant to be: "A servant of the law, and a representative of the people."

Upon retirement from the District Attorney's office in 2007, Jim joined the United States Department of Justice in Washington, DC. He serves as an Attorney Advisor and Security Programs Manager in the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). He holds a top secret security clearance, and his primary duties include investigating and administratively prosecuting allegations of professional misconduct made against US Department of Justice prosecutors, trial attorneys, and federal law enforcement agents. He also enforces and implements security regulations and procedures in OPR pertaining to the classification, declassification, and safeguarding of classified national security information.

Jim is married to his high school sweetheart Anne. They reside in Northern Virginia.