



## John Friend

March 21, 2025

John Friend, Trailblazing Kentucky Lawyer and Mentor, Dies at 41

John Friend, a brilliant attorney known for his colorful personality, unwavering advocacy, and commitment to reshaping Kentucky law, died on March 21, 2025, in Louisville, Kentucky. He was 41 years old.

The cause of death was Burkitt's lymphoma, following a brief but intense battle with the disease.

Born on November 8, 1983, in Norton, Virginia, Mr. Friend spent his formative years in Pikeville, Kentucky. He was a 2002 graduate of Pikeville High School. A self-proclaimed "hillbilly," he wore his Appalachian roots with pride, combining his small-town upbringing with a razor-sharp intellect that would later define his legal career.

Mr. Friend joined Alex R. White, PLLC in 2022, quickly earning a reputation as the firm's "answers man" for his strategic brilliance and legal insight. His incisive legal writing and command of complex issues made him a formidable presence in both trial and appellate courts.

Beyond the courtroom, Mr. Friend was a devoted mentor and teacher. He regularly spoke at his legal alma mater, the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law, and volunteered for oral argument competitions. His commitment to nurturing the next generation of lawyers was matched only by his advocacy for attorney mental health, a cause he championed especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Friend's colleagues remember him not just for his legal acumen, but for his

quirky wit, unmatched storytelling ability, and capacity to make any room laugh. His last text message to a law partner, "I love you too bro," encapsulated his authentic and heartfelt approach to both his personal and professional relationships. Notably, Mr. Friend was a giving individual, readily and selflessly offering his time to serve others, whether they be animals, old friends, new acquaintances, or disadvantaged litigants who never knew of his considerable efforts.

Mr. Friend is survived by his wife, Nora; his mother, Carole Friend, and stepfather, Alan Bessen; his siblings, Noah and Shelby Friend; and his beloved cats. He is preceded in death by his father, Tack Cornelius.

In John's memory, friends and colleagues are asked to stand up for the voiceless, volunteer time to support others' growth, and challenge injustice at every turn – embodying the principles that defined his impactful, albeit too short, life and career. In lieu of flowers, contributions are encouraged to <https://diy.lls.org/fundraiser/6203991>, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) in his honor. A Celebration of Life ceremony will take place in July.

# Cemetery Details

**Cremation was chosen**

# Tribute Wall



“ *John was a generous soul who absolutely never failed to give his time generously when I needed his help. Plenty will say this same thing, but it's important for me to add my voice to the rising chorus: John was a good friend and a gifted lawyer and I will miss him an awful lot.*

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**Devon Skeens** - March 28, 2025 at 02:21 PM

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*Thank you Devon, as John's mom I can tell you for certain that you are correct. John had a big heart and he cared deeply about his friends and his clients. There are a lot of people who will miss this kind and brilliant man.*

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**Carole Friend** - May 22, 2025 at 11:56 AM