

Eric G. Zahnd
August 19, 1968 – September 17, 2026

Eric Glen Zahnd, of Platte Woods, Missouri, passed away on September 17, 2026, in Platte City, Missouri. The youngest of three children, Eric was born on August 19, 1968, in St. Joseph, Missouri, to L. Glen Zahnd and Linda (Hardy) Zahnd. From an early age, Eric showed the qualities that would define his life: intelligence, curiosity, integrity, decisive leadership, and commitment to family, faith, and community.

Eric is survived by his wife and best friend, Tracy (McGaughey) Zahnd; sons, Benjamin Russell Zahnd and Luke Lawrence Zahnd; siblings, Brian (Peri) Zahnd and Melissa (Douglas) Hartwell, mother- and father-in-law, Karen and Willy McGaughey; brother-in-law, Kevin (Bessie) McGaughey; six nieces and nephews; and extended family. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Eric's first and greatest devotion in life was to his family, a love that began when he met Tracy in the fall of 1984 on the school bus home from KU Band Day. They married on June 20, 1992, building a life marked by loyalty, shared purpose, and deep affection. Tracy was Eric's best friend and partner, and together they created a home centered on love, service, and purpose. Eric took immense pride and joy in watching Benjamin and Luke grow up, discover their gifts, and pursue their passions. His care for his boys was steady, intentional, and unmistakable.

Eric was an accomplished scholar whose education reflected discipline and intellectual breadth. He graduated as valedictorian of the Savannah R-III High School Class of 1987, and summa cum laude in 1991 from William Jewell College. At Jewell, Eric pursued political science, economics, and philosophy through the Oxbridge Honors Program; served as student body president; and spent his junior year at Cambridge University in England.

Following college, Eric graduated with honors from Duke Law School in 1996. While at Duke, he was inducted into the Order of the Coif, served as an editor of a law journal, and earned a master's degree in philosophy. His scholarly work included an article on Aristotle's legal philosophy republished in the book Aristotle and Modern Law. Eric's education shaped a mind that was precise, focused, reflective, and deeply principled.

After having experience in the Missouri Attorney General's Office, the Missouri Governor's Commission on Crime, and six years in private practice at Bryan Cave, Eric was elected Platte County Prosecuting Attorney in 2002, becoming the longest-serving prosecutor in county history. He led an office of nearly thirty employees, including fourteen attorneys, and approached public service with discipline, thoughtfulness, and integrity. Eric was known for a citizens-first approach while supporting diversion programs and treatment courts for nonviolent offenders. His office operated Platte CARES and supported drug, DWI, mental health, and veterans' court programs. He prioritized child safety, helped establish one of Missouri's early cyber-crimes efforts to pursue internet predators, and was recognized nationally and locally for his work.

Beyond the courtroom, Eric helped improve Missouri criminal law through work related to Jessica's Law, repeat drunk-driver penalties, recorded interrogations in dangerous felony cases, and evidence rules for repeat child sex offender cases. He was named Missouri's Prosecutor of the Year in 2014 for helping establish best practices for prosecutors and leading national discussions on the topic. His professional excellence was also recognized by Missouri and Kansas "Super Lawyers," Missouri Lawyers Weekly, Ingram's "40 Under 40," and the 2026 President's Award from the Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.

Eric generously served civic, professional, and church organizations, including the Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, National District Attorneys Association, Missouri Humanities Council, William Jewell College Alumni Board of Governors, Northland Alternative Service Program, and Kansas City-area domestic violence and child protection efforts. He worshiped and faithfully served at Christ Church Anglican in Overland Park, Kansas, and Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Missouri.

Most of all, Eric savored time with family and close friends, enjoying travel, good food, music and concerts, and Kansas City Chiefs games. His home was his sanctuary, a peaceful and welcoming place for meals, companionship, and the music he loved best. Eric will be remembered as a man of uncommon focus and conviction. He was honest, intelligent, and disciplined, with an internal strength grounded in principle. He made decisions carefully and stood by them. He served purposefully, loved loyally, and led with integrity. His life reflected professional achievement, devotion to family, faithfulness to friends, and dedication to the public good.

A visitation will be held Wednesday, September 23, 2026, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at First Baptist Church in Platte City, Missouri. Funeral services will take place Thursday, September 24, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at the same location. A private family burial will follow at Savannah Cemetery in Savannah, Missouri. Gifts in Eric's memory may be directed to Synergy Services, MOCSA, or Christ Church Anglican.

"He was the man in the arena, not the critic nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbles."