

The Chicago Council of Lawyers Judicial Evaluations for Judicial Candidates Seeking to Fill Judicial Vacancies in the March 19, 2024 Primary Election

The Chicago Council of Lawyers evaluates judges seeking retention, judicial candidates seeking to fill vacancies through the public election process, and judicial candidates seeking to fill Associate Judge vacancies.

JUDICIAL ELECTIONS TO FILL CIRCUIT JUDGE VACANCIES

Judicial candidates seeking election must run for specific vacancies. Candidates seeking election to the Circuit Court – which is the County’s trial-level court for both civil and criminal matters – may run in either a countywide or a subcircuit race. Legislation creating the subcircuits provides that approximately one-third of the judges are elected by voters of the entire County, and each of the remaining judges elected by voters runs in one of 20 geographical districts into which the County has been arbitrarily divided. Once elected, there is no distinction between a “countywide” judge and a “subcircuit” judge. Either kind can be assigned to any judicial post in the County.

RETENTION ELECTIONS

Trial judges in Illinois are elected to six year terms. Appellate and Supreme Court Justices are elected to ten year terms. At the end of each term, their name goes on the November ballot with the following question: “Shall this judge be retained for another term in office.” Judges receiving 60% or more affirmative votes among those voting on the question receive another term on the bench.

The retention elections provide the voter with an opportunity to remove those judges whose judicial performance has been, in some respect, unsatisfactory. Retention elections provide the only practical opportunity for the voters as a whole to focus on the performance of judges, with a realistic opportunity to defeat those candidates who deserve to be defeated.

ELECTION BY CIRCUIT JUDGES TO FILL ASSOCIATE JUDGE VACANCIES

About one-third of judges in Cook County are elected by the sitting Circuit Judges to the position of Associate Judge. The Council evaluates the candidates seeking to fill Associate Judge vacancies

JUDICIAL STANDARDS AND METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The criteria for the Council's evaluations are whether judges seeking retention or judicial candidates seeking to fill vacancies have demonstrated the ability to serve on the relevant court in the following categories:

- fairness, including sensitivity to diversity and bias
- legal knowledge and skills (competence)
- integrity
- experience
- diligence
- impartiality
- judicial temperament
- respect for the rule of law
- independence from political and institutional influences
- professional conduct
- character
- community service

If a candidate has demonstrated the ability to perform the work required of a judge in all of these areas, the Council assigns a rating of "qualified." If a candidate has demonstrated excellence in all of these areas, the Council assigns a rating of "well qualified." If a candidate has not demonstrated that he or she meets all of the criteria evaluated by the Council, the Council assigns a rating of "not qualified." As part of the evaluation process, we require candidates to provide us with detailed information about their backgrounds, including any complaints filed against them with the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission ("ARDC") or the Judicial Inquiry Board ("JIB").

In conducting these evaluations, the Council has participated in a joint investigation and interview process with the Alliance of Bar Associations for Judicial Screening ("Alliance"). The Alliance includes the following bar associations: Arab American Bar Association, Asian American Bar Association, Black Men Lawyers Association, Black Women Lawyers Association, Chicago Council of Lawyers, Cook County Bar Association, Decalogue Society of Lawyers, Hellenic Bar Association, Hispanic Lawyers' Association of Illinois, Illinois State Bar

Association, Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago, Puerto Rican Bar Association, and the Women's Bar Association of Illinois.

The Council's evaluation process includes:

- (1) a review of a written informational questionnaire provided to the Alliance by the candidate, including details of the candidate's career and professional development and information on any complaints filed against the candidate with the JIB or the ARDC;
- (2) a review of the candidate's written responses to the supplemental essay questionnaire;
- (3) interviews of judges, attorneys, and others with personal knowledge about the candidate, including those who have and those who have not been referred to the Alliance by the candidate, and not restricted to Council members;
- (4) a review of the candidate's professional written work, where available;
- (5) an interview of the candidate done jointly with the Alliance;
- (6) review of any information concerning the candidate provided by the ARDC or the JIB;
- (7) a review of any other information available from public records, such as the Board of Election Commissioners and prosecutorial agencies; and
- (8) an evaluation of all the above materials by the Council's Judicial Evaluation Committee;
- (9) submission of the proposed evaluation and write-up to the candidate prior to its public release, to provide an opportunity for comment, correction, or reconsideration.
- (10) the candidate is given a reasonable period of time to submit a written appeal of the Council's rating and written findings. The appeal is a written response to concerns discussed in the proposed write-up. The appeal is reviewed by both members of the original committee and by individuals who work with the Committee exclusively for appeals. Appellate decision-making is done by consensus.

The Council places special importance on interviews with attorneys who practice before the judge, particularly those who were not referred to the Council by the candidate. Most evaluations are based on information gathered and interviews held during the few months just prior to the general election.

In evaluating candidates, the Council expresses written reasons for its conclusions. Without knowing the reason for a recommendation concerning a candidate, the public cannot use the bar's evaluations intelligently to draw its own conclusions.

The Council rates candidates as “*well qualified*,” “*qualified*,” or “*not qualified*.” If a candidate refuses to submit his or her credentials to the Council, that candidate is rated “*not recommended*” unless the Council is aware of credible information that would justify a “not qualified” rating. Because we believe a willingness to participate in bar association and other public evaluations is a key indicator of fitness for public office, no candidate who refuses to be screened can be found “qualified.”

We apply higher standards to candidates for the Supreme Court and the Appellate Court. Because these Courts establish legal precedents that bind the lower courts, their work has a broad impact on the justice system. Moreover, qualities of scholarship and writing ability are more important to the work of the Supreme and Appellate Court justices than they are to satisfactory performance as a trial judge.

The Council does *not* evaluate candidates based on their substantive views of political or social issues. Nor do we take into account the particular race in which a candidate is running or the candidates against whom a candidate is running. We apply a uniform standard for all countywide and subcircuit elections because judges elected through either method can be assigned to any judicial position in the Circuit Court.

It should be noted that a lawyer might be performing well or even very well without being qualified to be a judge. A good lawyer may be unqualified to be a judge, for instance, because of a narrow range of prior experience, limited trial experience, or limited work doing legal research and writing. A lawyer may have the temperament and intelligence to be a judge without yet having worked in a position that would allow the candidate to demonstrate that capacity. Accordingly, it should be recognized and expected that we will rate some good lawyers “not qualified.”

Illinois Supreme Court -- First District

Vacancy of the Hon. Anne M. Burke

Hon. Jesse G. Reyes -- Qualified

Hon. Jesse G. Reyes was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1984. Since 2012, he has served as a Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court, First District, Fourth Division. Previously he was a Cook County Circuit Judge, where his assignments included the Chancery Division's Mortgage Foreclosure/Mechanics Lien Section (2005-2012); the Chancery Division, County Department and the First Municipal District, Municipal Department (2002-2005); the First Municipal District, First District (2001-2005, 1997-1999); and the Sixth Municipal District (Markham; 1999-2001).

Judge Reyes has good legal ability and has had substantial experience both as a trial judge and as an Appellate Court Justice. He is reported to be well prepared at oral argument and his opinions are reported to be well written and well-reasoned. The Council finds him Qualified for the Illinois Supreme Court.

Hon. Joy Cunningham – Well Qualified

Justice Joy Cunningham was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1982. She currently serves on the Illinois Supreme Court where she was appointed in December 2022. Prior to that appointment, she has served on the Appellate Court for sixteen years, as Senior VP and General Counsel for Northwestern Memorial Healthcare System, as an Associate Judge in the Circuit Court of Cook County, as Associate General Counsel for Loyola University and Loyola Medical Center, and as an Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Division where she began her career. She has served as an ALI advisor on Conflict of Laws and has lectured at UIC and Loyola Law Schools on trends in the law and legal practice. She is active in a number of bar associations, legal societies, and nonprofits including the Chicago Bar Association where she was President (2004-2005).

Justice Cunningham has been well respected in all of her previous positions, and is praised for her legal ability and knowledge as a Supreme Court Justice. She is reported to always be prepared for oral argument and her rulings are considered to be thorough and well reasoned. She is also praised for her calm and highly professional temperament. She is exceptionally active in community activities. The Council finds her Well Qualified for the Supreme Court.

Illinois Appellate Court – First District

Vacancy of Hon. Hon. Maureen E. Connors

Hon. Mary Mikva – Well Qualified

Justice Mary Mikva was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1980. She was first elected as judge for the Circuit Court of Cook County in 2004 where she served in Chancery until she was appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court to the First District Appellate Court in 2016. She has been in the Fifth Division since September 2023. Prior to her tenure as a judge, she clerked for Justice Prentice Marshall and Justice William Brennan, practiced civil rights and employment law, and practiced criminal defense law. She has given substantial professional presentations on legal issues and has extensive community involvement, including with various bar associations and non-profit organizations.

Justice Mikva is a well respected jurist with very good legal ability. She is praised for her well reasoned and thorough opinions. She is reported to always be well prepared for oral argument and treats all before her with respect. She is praised for her full command of the law and is active and thorough in her questioning during oral arguments. She is described by many lawyers as a model judge who issues timely and thoughtful opinions, and who is always respectful of those before her. The Council finds her Well Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Illinois Appellate Court – First District

Vacancy of the Hon. Joy V. Cunningham

Hon. Cynthia Cobbs – Well Qualified

Justice Cynthia Cobbs was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1988. Prior to her appointment to the bench in 2011, she served as a staff attorney and chief legal counsel of the Administrative Offices of Illinois Courts. She is currently assigned to the First District Appellate Court (since 2015). She is a member of various bar associations and legal societies, including the Illinois Judges Association where she has served as co-chair of the Pro Bono Committee and a member of the Board of Directors. She has also been a board member of South Suburban PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) and Higher Education in Haiti.

Justice Cobbs is a highly respected jurist who is considered to have very good legal ability. She is praised for her thorough understanding of the issues being argued before her. Her temperament is described as patient and respectful. She is reported to issue well reasoned opinions in a timely fashion. The Council finds her Well Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Hon. Carolyn J. Gallagher – Not Qualified

Judge Carolyn J. Gallagher was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1982. Since 2018, she has been assigned to the Probate Division, County Department, where she hears Decedent's Estates cases, Adult Guardianship cases, and Minor Guardianship cases. Her previous judicial assignments were in the Municipal Department of the First Municipal District, in the Housing Division (2017-2018) and the Traffic Division (2016-2017). Previously she was a Solo Practitioner at the Law Office of Carolyn J. Gallagher (2004-2016), where she handled Appellate Law and Complex Commercial Litigation, Real Estate Law, and Financial Institution Law. She also worked as a Legal Writing Instructor at DePaul University College of Law (2000-2004) and again as a Solo Practitioner at the Law Office of Carolyn Gallagher Brocksmith (1996-2000).

Many lawyers found Judge Gallagher to have good legal ability but many also raised concerns about her grasp of the issues related to the cases before her. She is reported to be fair with a good temperament, but many lawyers are concerned with her ability to manage her caseload, including the length of time it takes her to rule. The Council understands that an under-performing employee of the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court may have affected the running of Judge Gallagher's courtroom; however, that explanation does not fully address the concerns raised. On balance, the Council finds Judge Gallagher Not Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Illinois Appellate Court – First District

Vacancy of the Hon. Mathias W. Delort

Hon Celia Gamrath – Well Qualified

Judge Celia Gamrath was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1994. She was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2010 and elected in 2012. From 2010 to 2016, she served in the Domestic Relations Division and has been in Chancery since 2016. Prior to her appointment, she worked in family law litigation for Schiller, DuCanto, and Fleck, and was a clerk in the Illinois Appellate Court (1994-1997). She has lectured for the UIC Law School on various occasions and has several bar association publications. She is also a member of various bar associations, including as past president of the Justinian Society of Lawyers, and legal societies as well as actively involved in mentorship to judges and law students.

Judge Gamrath is praised for her knowledge of the law. She is said to read all pleadings and understand the issues before her. Lawyers say that she give fair hearings with principled rulings, She is considered to be hard working and impartial with a respectful and professional demeanor. She has numerous published articles and has substantial experience as a lawyer. The Council finds her Well Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Hon. Leonard Murray – Qualified

Judge Leonard Murray was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1974. He was elected to the Circuit Court in 2016 and currently serves as Acting Supervising Judge in the Housing Section of the First Municipal Department. Prior to his election, he had served as an Associate Judge since 2007. Previously, he was in private practice, first with a large accounting firm and then, from 1980 to 2007, as a solo practitioner with a varied practice, focused primarily in litigation.

Lawyers say Judge Murray is smart and knowledgeable. Some respondents complain that he is slow to start his call, but he is generally praised for his impartiality and ability to manage his courtroom. He understands the issues and reportedly does a good job of applying the facts to the law and having decisions that are fair to all parties. The Council finds him Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Illinois Appellate Court – First District

Vacancy of the Hon. Eileen O’Neill Burke

Hon. Carl Walker – Well Qualified

Justice Carl Walker was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1992. He was assigned to the Illinois Appellate Court in 2018. He is currently in the Sixth Division of the First District. He has been a judge since 2006 (including Domestic Violence, Eviction, Juvenile, and Law Division assignments). Prior to that, his private practice focused on real estate, insurance, and personal injury. He has given professional presentations and guest lectured for UIC Law’s summer program. He is a member of numerous bar associations and legal societies.

Justice Walker is considered to have good legal ability. He is reported to be always well prepared and is fair and patient during oral argument. He is praised for his steady composure on the bench. Judge Walker is a respected jurist and the Council finds him Well Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. James P. Flannery

Pablo F. deCastro – Qualified

Pablo F. deCastro was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1994. Since 2012, he has been a solo practitioner in the Law offices of Pablo deCastro, where he focuses on criminal defense. He also handled criminal defense cases as a partner at Rascia and deCastro (2007-2012) and as an associate attorney at Serpico, Novelle, Petrosino and Rascia (2000-2012). Previously (1994-2000), he had been an Assistant Public Defender in the Office of the Cook County Public Defender. He is a member of numerous bar associations and legal societies, including the American Bar Association, the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals Criminal Justice Act Panel, and the Northern District of Illinois Criminal Justice Act Panel, where he serves on the Attorney Selection Panel.

Mr. deCastro is considered to have good legal ability and to be a zealous advocate for his clients. He is praised for his temperament and is active in pro bono matters. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Chelsey R. Robinson – Qualified

Chelsey R. Robinson was admitted to practice in 1996. She is a Partner in a small firm where she handles civil and criminal litigation matters. Her practice also includes bankruptcy and employment discrimination matters in federal court. She is widely praised for her legal ability and for her knowledge of the law. She has litigation experience in a variety of matters in both state and federal courts. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Vincent Gaughan

Hon. Corinne Cantwell Heggie -- Qualified

Judge Corinne Cantwell Heggie was admitted to practice in 2002 and was appointed to the bench in 2023. Prior to joining the bench, she had been a solo practitioner since 2018 doing probate and estate law. She has been in private practice since 2002, including serving as a partner with Hinshaw & Culbertson between 2008 and 2016. She has jury trial experience and has substantial motion practice litigation experience. She is considered to have good legal ability and knowledge of the law. She is praised for her temperament and integrity, and was a well respected practitioner. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Catherine Haberkorn

Hon. Sarah Rodak Johnson -- Qualified

Sarah Rodak Johnson was admitted to practice in 2006 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024. She began her career with a private personal injury defense firm. Between 2009 and 2023 she has been with another private firm and has been a partner there since 2016. She is a published author and has substantial litigation experience in more complex matters. As a practitioner, she was considered to have good legal ability and is praised for her litigation skills. She is reported to be organized and always prepared. She is reported to have a professional demeanor. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Arnette Hubbard

Hon. Deidre Dyer -- Qualified

Judge Deidre Dyer was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2000 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2023. She is currently assigned to the Traffic Division. Prior to that appointment, she worked for the Cook County State's Attorney as the Deputy Supervisor of Public Corruption/Financial Crimes/Money Laundering/Civil Consumer Fraud (2015-2023), for the State's Attorney's Special Prosecution Bureau (2009-2015), for the Attorney General's Special Prosecution Bureau (2006-2009), and as Supervising Regional Counsel for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. She is a member of a number of bar associations, including the Chicago Bar Association (co-chair of the Wellbeing and Mindfulness Committee) and the Cook County Bar Association (past co-chair of Mental Health Committee).

Judge Dyer is considered to have very good legal ability. As a practitioner, she had substantial litigation experience in both criminal and civil matters. She is praised for both her skills as a practitioner and as a supervisor. She is reported to have an excellent temperament. She has

received positive reviews for the short time she has served as an appointed Circuit Judge. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Marcia Maras

Hon. Arlene Coleman-Romeo – Qualified

Arlene Coleman-Romeo was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1987. She was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2022. Between 1996 and taking the bench, she had been Principal at A.Y. Coleman and Associates, where her practice focuses on probate, estate planning, real estate, employment law, and civil litigation. From 2008 to 2017, she was a Managing Member of Coleman, Martin & Brown LLC, where she handled employment discrimination, civil defense, probate litigation, estate planning, business law, and misdemeanor criminal matters. Previously (1987-1996), she was an Associate Attorney/Litigation Associate at Witwer, Poltrack & Giampietro, where she focused on labor and employment law and represented members of the Chicago Teachers Union in disciplinary administrative proceedings and other matters. She is a member of the National Bar Association, the Illinois State Bar Association (Trust and Estates Committee), and the Cook County Bar Association (President, 2015-2016; Presidential Adviser, 2020-2021). She has provided pro bono legal services for several organizations, including the Cook County Bar Association (General Counsel, 2020-2021), United Services of Chicago, Inc. (General Counsel, 2014), and the United Independent Workers International Union (General Counsel, 2000-2004).

Ms. Coleman-Romeo is considered to have good legal ability with extensive experience as a probate lawyer before taking the bench. As a practitioner, she had extensive litigation experience and is praised for her litigation skills and for her temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Raymond W. Mitchell

Hon. Neil Cohen -- Qualified

Judge Neil Cohen was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1976. He worked as an Assistant State's Attorney and in solo criminal defense practice prior to taking the bench as an associate judge. Since 2011, he has been in the Chancery Court at the Daley Center. He has extensive teaching and lecturing experience including various symposia and seven years as a clinical adjunct at

Chicago-Kent College of Law. He is the President of the Jewish Judges' Association and a member of various other bar associations and legal societies.

Judge Cohen is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for his thorough knowledge and understanding of the complex issues he faces in his current judicial assignment. He is praised for his diligence in issuing opinions in a timely manner. Most lawyers praise his temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Wende Williams – Not Recommended

Wende Williams did not participate in the evaluation process. The Council finds her Not Recommended for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Timothy P. Murphy

Hon. Edward Underhill -- Qualified

Judge Edward Underhill was admitted to practice in 1984 and was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2023. Prior to taking the bench, Mr. Underhill was a senior partner and chair of the Commercial Litigation Practice Group at Masuda, Funai, Eifert & Mitchell, Ltd. where he has been employed since 1984. In this role he focused on commercial litigation in both federal and state courts proceedings. He has also served in the DeKalb County State's Attorney's Office.

Judge Underhill is considered to have good legal ability and was a well respected practitioner before taking the bench. As a judge he is praised for his professional and courteous judicial temperament. He was especially praised for the way he presides over cases where at least one of the parties is unrepresented by legal counsel. He is reported to rule in a fair, impartial, and unbiased manner. He is reported to be an excellent jurist in the short time that he has been on the bench. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Lori Ann Roper – Qualified

Lori Ann Roper was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1994. She is a career Assistant Cook County Public Defender. She is assigned to 26th and California where she is an Attorney Supervisor. She has held various positions as an Assistant Public Defender. Ms. Roper has substantial litigation experience in a variety of complex criminal law matters. She advises other Assistant Public Defenders on litigation strategies, and is considered to be an excellent lawyer. She is reported to have a professional and low key temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Lorna Propes

Hon. Debjani Dasgupta Desai – Well Qualified

Judge Debjani Dasgupta Desai was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2008 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2023. Before taking the bench, she served as General Counsel of the Illinois Office of Comptroller, Special Prosecutor for the Cook County Child Protection Division, and Adjunct Professor at UIC Law School. She also served as Assistant General Counsel and Administrative Law Judge in the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (2016- 2020) and as an Assistant State’s Attorney for the Cook County State’s Attorney Office (2008- 2016), where she served in the Public Corruption Unit, the Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Divisions, and the Child Support Enforcement Division. She is a member of a number of bar associations, including the South Asian Bar Association of Chicago Foundation (President, 2021), the South Asian Bar Association of Chicago (President, 2018), the Women’s Bar Association of Illinois, and the Chicago Bar Association.

Judge Desai is considered to have very good legal ability. She is reported to be knowledgeable and has successfully learned a variety of areas of law during her career. She is praised as a litigator, as an administrator, as an administrative hearing officer, and as a law school adjunct professor. She is reported to have a good temperament. She is respectful and professional. She is described as “detail-oriented” and is exceptionally hard working. She is also described as empathetic toward people appearing before her and with her students. The Council finds her Well Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Hon. Russell W. Hartigan – Well Qualified

Judge Russell W. Hartigan was admitted to practice in 1976. He served as a Circuit Court judge between 2010 and 2017. He was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2010. As a lawyer he practiced for 34 years before becoming a judge and has practiced since retiring from the bench in 2017. He has been exceptionally active in bar association activities.

As a lawyer, Judge Hartigan had substantial litigation experience in both civil and criminal law matters, including appellate court experience. He was praised for his litigation skills, for his temperament, and for his integrity. As a judge, he spent much of his career in the Bridgeview Courthouse hearing a variety of cases. He was a well-respected jurist who was praised for his courtroom demeanor and management skills. The Council finds him Well Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. William Raines

Hon. Jennifer Patricia Callahan – Qualified

Judge Jennifer Patricia Callahan was admitted to practice in 2006 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024. She had been a sole practitioner at the end of her career, but spent most of her career as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney. She has substantial litigation experience including prosecuting complex felony cases in the Narcotics Prosecutions Bureau, and as a prosecutor in the Alternative Prosecutions Unit where she handled cases in Drug, Mental Health, and Veterans Treatment Courts.

Ms Callahan is praised for her legal ability and knowledge of the law and she is reported to exhibit great patience and sensitivity toward those she prosecuted and now defend. She is also praised for her litigation skills. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Laura M. Sullivan

Hon. James Stephen Murphy-Aguilu -- Qualified

Judge James Stephen Murphy-Aguilu was admitted to practice in 2006 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2023. Between 2021 and taking the bench, he was the Inspector General for the Clerk of the Circuit Court overseeing investigations into fraud, waste, mismanagement, and misconduct by employees of the Clerk’s Office. From 2017 to 2020 he served as the Deputy Chief Administrator of Investigation for COPA. From 2013 to 2017, he was in private practice, and from 2006 to 2013 he served as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney. He had bench and jury litigation experience earlier in his career. He has served as both a prosecutor and as a criminal defense attorney. He is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for his knowledge of the law. He is praised for his temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Ashonta Rice – Qualified (removed from the ballot)

Ashonta Rice was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2005. She is currently a solo practitioner (Akiwowo Law Group, since 2007) in family law and child protection litigation. Previously, she worked for the Cook County Public Guardian (2004-2007) and New Orleans Legal Assistance Corp. (2002-2004). She is a member of various bar associations, including the Black Women’s Lawyers Association of Greater Chicago where she has served as committee co-chair.

Ashonta Rice is considered to have good legal ability with substantial litigation experience. She is reported to have good temperament with a variety of litigation experiences. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court - Countywide

Vacancy of the Hon. Debra B. Walker

Hon. Chloe Gerogianna Pedersen -- Qualified

Judge Chloe G. Pedersen was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2007 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2023. Before taking the bench, she served as an Associate and Equity Partner for Fletcher & Sippel, LLC, where she represented employers in a full range of labor and employment matters before regulatory agencies and in state and federal court litigation. Previously she served as Chief Legal and Labor Counsel for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds (2012-2014), as Assistant Attorney General in the Office of the Illinois Attorney General (2010-2012), as Assistant General Counsel to Speaker of the House of Representatives 96th General Assembly of the Illinois House of Representatives (2009), and as an Associate Attorney (2007-2009) at Querry & Harrow, Ltd., where she defended local municipal corporations and litigated a variety of other cases, including premise liability, personal injury, and insurance defense and coverage.

As a practitioner, Judge Pederson was considered to have good legal ability and had litigation experience in more complex matters. She was reported to be very knowledgeable in her areas of practice and reports a variety of published articles. She is reported to have a good demeanor and enjoys a reputation of always being prepared. She is active in the professional community in areas related to race and gender, and participates often as a presenter in seminars and lectures. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

3rd Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Janet Adams Brosnahan

Lucesther “Lucy” Vazquez -- Not Qualified

Lucesther “Lucy” Vazquez was admitted to practice in 2009. She worked as an associate in a small firm handling family law cases from 2009 to 2017. She became a solo practitioner in 2017 where she handles family law, probate, immigration, and mediation matters. Most of her courtroom work is as a guardian ad litem. She has served as an administrative law judge from 2020 to the present handling non-complex City of Chicago building code violations. She is

reported to be knowledgeable in her fields of practice and she is reported to have a good temperament. However, the Council is concerned that there have been reports questioning her punctuality and diligence --noting that she sometimes fails to meet court deadlines and return communications to other lawyers. We are also concerned about her lack of litigation experience in more complex matters. The Council finds her Not Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Martin Reggi -- Qualified

Martin Reggi was admitted to practice in 1980. He served from 1980 to 1985 as an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney. He has been a sole practitioner since 1985 with a litigation practice spanning a variety of civil and criminal matters.

Mr. Reggi is considered to have good legal ability with substantial litigation experience, much of which involving more complex matters. He is praised for his temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

3rd Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Edward S. Harmening

Patrick Heery – Qualified

Patrick Heery has served since 2019 as Senior Labor Counsel with the Cook County Bureau of Human Resources – Labor Division, where he serves as legal advisor on issues including litigation and arbitrations before the Illinois Labor Relations Board. Prior to his current position he served briefly as an administrative law judge and as a Judge Advocate in the Marine Corps. He is active in volunteer community activities.

Patrick Heery is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for his knowledge of the law in labor law matters. He has litigation experience and is an author for IICLE materials. He is reported to have good temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

4th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Peter Felice

Michael Chvatal -- Qualified

Michael Chvatal was admitted to practice in 2005. He began his career as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney (2006-2009), and then went into private practice focusing on criminal defense and real estate matters. He has served as an Administrative Hearing Office for 2 municipalities. He is active in community and bar association activities.

Mr. Chvatal is considered to have good legal ability and has substantial litigation experience. He is reported to have a good temperament and is praised for his fairness and for always being prepared. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

4th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Edward J. King

Hon. Philip Fowler -- Qualified

Judge Philip Fowler was admitted to practice in 1987 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2023. He spent his career doing civil litigation as a lawyer in private firms. Between 2015 and becoming a judge, he was an associate at Karlin Fleisher & Falkenberg handling medical malpractice and personal injury cases, attorney discipline and legal ethics matters, civil rights cases, and representation of DCFS wards when they are under investigation. He had substantial jury and bench litigation experience. He is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for his temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

4th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Edward M. Maloney

Hon. Kyriakoula Fournier -- Qualified

Judge Kyriakoula Fournier was admitted to practice in 2000 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024. She was a career Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney where she was assigned to the Criminal Appeals Unit since 2012. She has substantial litigation experience in addition to her more recent experience as an appellate lawyer. She is considered to have good legal ability, and is praised for her temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

5th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Cassandra Lewis

Hon. Yolanda Harris Sayre -- Qualified

Judge Yolanda H. Sayre was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1995 and was appointed to the bench in 2024. Between 1995 and taking the bench, her primary employment has been with the Chicago Police Department (CPD), where she was an Attorney. Her duties at the CPD include training CPD personnel in civil rights laws, criminal laws and criminal procedures. In addition, she is a Solo Practitioner with a general law practice focusing on consulting, real estate transactions, contract negotiations, and other matters (1996-present) and also an Attorney/Hearing Officer at the Illinois Secretary of State's Office (July 2019-present). Previously, she served as an Attorney/Hearing Officer at the Cook County and Chicago Boards of Election (2003-January 2019). She provides pro bono services to the First Municipal District Pro Bono Program, where she represents self-represented litigants.

Judge Sayre is considered to have good legal ability and her temperament is unquestioned. She is praised for her knowledge of her particular practice areas. The Council is concerned that she has little litigation experience and that her practice area is narrow. On balance, the Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

7th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Irwin Solganick

Hon. Owens J. Shelby – Qualified

Judge Owens J. Shelby was admitted to practice in 2007. He was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2023. Before taking the bench he had been a career Cook County Assistant State's Attorney working as a second chair prosecutor in a felony trial courtroom. He did serve for less than a year as the Assistant Counsel to the Speaker of the Illinois House, and as a contract attorney with Loevy & Loevy in 2007 to 2008.

Judge Shelby is considered to have good legal ability with a very good temperament. He is praised for his diligence. As a practitioner, most lawyers praise his abilities although a few say he lacked adequate experience. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Deidre Baumann – Qualified

Deidre Baumann was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1992. Since 2011, she has been Owner of Baumann & Shuldiner, where she focuses on litigation of civil rights, employment discrimination, personal injury, and criminal defense at the state, federal, and appellate level. Previously, she was a Partner at Baumann & Shuldiner (2004-2011) and Baumann, Shuldiner & Lee (2001- 2004), a Solo Practitioner (1996-2001), and an Associate at Michael Null & Associates (1993- 1996). She is a member of a number of bar associations, including the Chicago Bar Association (Racial Justice Coalition, 2020-2021), the Decalogue Society of Lawyers (Board Member, 2017- present), the Illinois State Bar Association (Chair, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee), and the North Suburban Bar Association (President, 2005-2006).

Ms. Baumann is considered to have good legal ability. She has substantial litigation experience and is praised for her temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

8th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Ann Collins-Dole

Hon. Loveleen K. Ahuja – Qualified

Judge Loveleen K. Ahuja was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2005 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024.. For her entire career she served as an Assistant Public Defender in the Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender, where she is currently assigned to the Homicide Task Force. She is a member of the Women’s Bar Association, the Asian American Bar Association, and the South Asian Bar Association, where she serves as a Board Member. She has provided pro bono services as an Expungement Volunteer in the Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender.

Judge Ahuja is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for her integrity. She is reported to have a good temperament while being a zealous advocate for her clients. She is a mentor to other lawyers in her office. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court

Cook County Circuit Court

10th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Clare E. McWilliams

Hon. Caroline Gale Glennon – Qualified

Judge Caroline Gale Glennon was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1996 and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024. Prior to being appointed to the bench, she, since 2014, she served as an Assistant Public Defender, Grade 4, Homicide Attorney at the Cook County Public Defenders Office in Rolling Meadows. She has also served in the Cook Public Defender's Office on the Homicide Task Force, Chicago (2005-2014), in the Felony Trial Division (2003-2005), in Preliminary Hearings, Bond Court (2001-2003), Juvenile Delinquency (1999-2001), and Traffic Court (1997-1999).

Judge Caroline Gale Glennon is considered to have excellent legal knowledge. She has extensive litigation experience in more complex matters. She is also praised for her temperament as well as for her diligence and punctuality. The Council finds her qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

10th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Gregory J. Wajkowski

James Vincent Murphy III – Qualified

James Vincent Murphy III was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1997. Between 1998 and 2022, he served as an Assistant State's Attorney for the Cook County State's Attorney Office. He left the State's Attorney's Office in 2022. In that Office, he was most recently the Supervisor of the Preliminary Hearings/Grand Jury/Central Bond Court/Branch 66 Homicide and Sex Unit. Previously, he worked in the Felony Review Unit and in Child Support Enforcement, Juvenile Abuse and Neglect, Juvenile Delinquency, and Preliminary Hearings. From 1997 to 1998 he was a Legislative Aide to the City of Chicago's Committee on Zoning. He is a member of the Chicago Bar Association.

Mr. Murphy is considered to have good legal ability. He has extensive litigation experience as a prosecutor. He is praised for his temperament. The Council notes that he was reinstated after initially put on administrative leave for his actions in the bond hearing in the Adam Toledo case. This situation must be contrasted against a career in which the candidate has established

himself as a well-respected practitioner. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Liam Kelly -- Qualified

Liam Kelly was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2011. He recently took a position with the Office of the Illinois State Appellate Defender. Previously, he worked as an associate attorney for Robert Louis Rascia in criminal defense where he worked since 2019 (and from 2014-2018). Additionally, he has been an associate attorney for Greenberg and Associates (2018-2019), an associate attorney for Villalobos and Associates (2014), an associate attorney for The Rooth Law Firm (2013-2014), and an associate attorney for the Law Offices of Donald J. Angelini Jr. (2011-2013).

Liam Kelly is considered to have substantial experience in criminal defense matters and is praised for his temperament. He has considerable litigation experience and is praised for his litigation skills. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

11th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Ann Finley Collins

Hon. Dawn Gonzalez -- Qualified

Judge Dawn Gonzalez was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1994, and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024. Before taking the bench, she served as a partner at Stone & Johnson Charter with a focus on tort defense and insurance coverage cases (since 2018). Prior to this position, she was a Senior Coverage Litigation Attorney in The Coverage Litigation Group (2015-2017), an Equity Partner at Baugh Dalton Carlson & Ryan (2011-2015), a non-equity partner at Litchfield Cavo (2000-2011), an associate attorney at Meckler Bulger and Tilson (1997-2000), and Associate Attorney at Haskell & Perrin (1994-1997). She is a current member of a number of bar associations, including the Women's Bar Association of Illinois where she has served as President and chaired a variety of committees. She has also been on various non-profit boards in Oak Park.

Judge Dawn Gonzalez is considered to have good legal ability with a thorough understanding and knowledge of insurance coverage law. She has substantial litigation experience and is praised for her litigation skills. She is reported to have a calm and professional temperament even in the midst of heated litigation. She was praised by both practitioners and judges as a well respected practitioner. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

11th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Paula M. Daleo

Kimberly Przekota -- Qualified

Kimberly Przekota was admitted to practice in 2008 and is a career Assistant Cook County State's Attorney. She is a First Chair prosecutor in the Criminal Division. She is praised for her legal ability and knowledge. She is reported to have a good temperament and trial skills. She has substantial litigation experience in more complex matters. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Audrey Victoria Cosgrove -- Qualified

Audrey Victoria Cosgrove was admitted to practice in 1990. She serves as the Deputy General Counsel of the Department of the Illinois Lottery. From 1990 to 1998 she served as an Assistant Cook County Public Defender. She then became a solo practitioner until 2017 at which time she for one year served as Assistant General Counsel for the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Division of Banking. From 2018-2019 she was Deputy Chief Legal Counsel for the Illinois Department of Labor. She has also served as an administrative law judge for most of her career. She has substantial litigation experience. She is considered to have good legal ability and is active in community activities. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

12th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Grace G. Dickler

Alon Stein – Qualified

Alon Stein was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2002. Since 2013, he has been the Owner and Managing Attorney of Stein Legal Offices, where he focuses on commercial litigation but also handles constitutional matters and employment/wages litigation. Previously, he handled civil litigation, commercial litigation, and appeals as Of Counsel (2013-2017) for The Nathanson Law Firm and as an Associate (2004-2013) and Of Counsel (2013-2015) for Kamensky Rubinstein Hochman & Delott, LLP. From 2002 to 2004, he was an Associate at Blau & Bonavich, where he represented customers suing their brokers in arbitration and plaintiffs in employment actions. He is a member of several bar associations, including the Illinois State Bar Association and the Chicago Bar Association.

Mr. Stein is considered to have good legal ability. He has substantial litigation experience in more complex matters in both state courts and before administrative agencies. He is praised for his litigation skills and for his diligence. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Maria McCarthy -- Qualified

Maria McCarthy worked early in her career for Freeborn & Peters in Chicago where she defended companies in civil litigation. But she worked as an assistant state's attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office for 30 years. From 2009 to 2019, she was Supervisor of the Third Municipal District. Prior to holding that position, she was the Supervisor of the Homicide/Sex Unit in Chicago, the Supervisor of the Domestic Violence Division and was a Deputy Supervisor in the Traffic Division. She subsequently worked as the First Assistant in the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office, where she supervised the Criminal and Civil Bureaus. In 2022, she was appointed Special Prosecutor in murder cases that are pending in Will County.

Maria McCarthy is considered to have good legal ability with substantial litigation experience in both criminal and civil matters. She is reported to have a very good temperament and is praised for her litigation skills. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

12th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Marguerite Quinn

Hon. Frank Andreou -- Qualified

Judge Frank Andreou was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1995. He currently presides over Calendar D (motion call) in the Law Division of the Cook County Circuit Court where he hears cases involving commercial litigation, medical and professional malpractice, toxic tort, product liability, auto liability, defamation, and other cases. He previously handled traffic and misdemeanor cases before moving to the Law Division. Prior being sworn in as an Associate Judge in January 2020, he worked in private practice for 20 years and for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office from 1995-1999.

Judge Andreou is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for his ability to have a thorough grasp of the issues being argued before him. He is praised for his fairness and his professional temperament. He is also reported to be punctual and always prepared. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Pamela Curran Smith -- Qualified

Pamela Curran Smith was admitted to practice in 2006. She is a partner with a small law firm doing criminal defense and personal injury litigation. She has substantial litigation experience. She is considered to have good legal ability, and is praised for her litigation skills. She is reported to have a good temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

12th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Andrea M. Schleifer

James Costello --Qualified

James Costello was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2007. He has spent his career as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney Office, where since 2019 he has served in the Special Prosecutions Bureau, Public Corruption and Financial Crimes Unit (he is currently First Chair). He has also served in the Felony Trial Division (2016-2019), the Felony Review and Preliminary Hearings Unit (2013-2016), the Misdemeanors/Traffic/Preliminary Hearings Units at the Markham courthouse (2009-2013), and Criminal Appeals in the Daley Center (2007-2009).

Mr. Costello is considered to have good legal ability and is especially praised for his temperament. He is reported to be knowledgeable and fair with lawyers and litigants. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Matthew Jay Taylor -- Qualified

Matthew Jay Taylor was admitted to practice in 2004 and has always practiced as a sole practitioner. He was a suburban police officer for 10 years prior to becoming a lawyer and currently works at the College of DuPage Suburban Law Enforcement Academy. He is the village prosecutor for 3 municipalities. His law practice includes real estate, probate, misdemeanor defense, child custody issues, and work in the Chancery Division of the Circuit Court.

Mr. Taylor is considered to have good legal ability and is reported to have good temperament. He is praised for his knowledge of the law and for always being prepared. He has substantial litigation experience in both civil and criminal law matters. He is a well respected practitioner. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

13th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Samuel J. Betar III

Hon. Ralph Eugene Meczyk -- Qualified

Judge Ralph Eugene Meczyk was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1977 and was appointed to the

bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024. Between 1981 and taking the bench, he was been Principal/Lead Counsel of Ralph E. Meczyk & Associates, where he focused on criminal defense, including complex white-collar litigation and as well as other felony cases in state and federal court. From 1977 to 1981, he served as an Assistant State's Attorney for the Cook County State's Attorney Office. He is a member of a number of bar associations, including the American Bar Association, the Chicago Bar Association (Co-Chair, Criminal Justice Committee), the Federal Bar Association, and the Illinois State Bar Association.

Judge Meczyk is considered to have excellent legal ability and is highly praised for his litigation skills. He has substantial in jury and bench litigation experience in complex matters. He has handles some of the most wide-ranging and significant cases in both state and federal courts. He is praised for his temperament. Respondents say he is respectful of all persons while being a zealous advocate for his clients. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

13th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Ketki Shroff Steffen

Hon. Mary Sevandal-Cohen -- Qualified

Judge Mary Sevandal-Cohen was admitted in 2005, and was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2024. Before taking the bench, she served as a senior staff attorney for PACE (the suburban bus division of the RTA). She has substantial civil litigation experience and is an active member of PACE's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She had been with PACE since 2008. From 2005 to 2008 she was an Assistant DeKalb County State's Attorney's Office. She is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for her litigation skills. She is also praised for her professional demeanor. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

14th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. James N. O'Hara

Griselda Vega Samuel -- Qualified

Griselda Vega Samuel was admitted to practice in the state of Washington in 2001 and in Illinois in 2008. Since 2018, she has served as regional counsel, Midwest at the Mexican American

Legal Defense and Educational Fund. She does impact litigation in state and federal courts, as well as legislative policy advocacy. From 2001-2004 and from 2007-2008, Ms. Vega Samuel served as a staff attorney at Columbia Legal Services in Yakima, Washington, from 2005-2006, she was employed at Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (now Legal Aid Chicago) doing family law, housing, and consumer law. From 2008-2013, she was a Senior Attorney and Legal Director at the Justice in Motion in Brooklyn, New York. From 2013 to 2018 she was employed by Safe Horizon Anti-Trafficking Program.

Ms. Vega Samuel is considered to have good legal ability and is well respected in the legal and social justice communities. She has substantial litigation experience in civil court matters, including both individual representation and in impact litigation. She is praised for her temperament both as a practitioner and as a supervisor. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Steve Demitro – Qualified

Steve Demitro was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2000. Since that time, he has been a Solo Practitioner. His practice is concentrated on torts (personal injury), but he also handles some criminal law, domestic relations, real estate, probate, and chancery matters.

Mr. Demitro is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for his temperament. He is very active in community affairs. He has had substantial litigation experience, particularly in recent years. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

14th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Daniel J. Pierce

Hon. Judge Stephanie Miller -- Qualified

Judge Stephanie Miller was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1999. She became a judge in 2017 and is currently an associate judge in the Probate Division handling adult guardianship. As a judge, she has been in the minor guardianship courtroom in Probate (2018-2022), Bond Court (2017-2018), 1st Municipal District (2017), and Traffic (2017). Prior to her appointment, she worked as a Guardian Ad Litem, an Assistant State's Attorney, and for the Chicago Children's Advocacy Center. She has given various professional presentations on legal issues, including to law students at Chicago-Kent and Loyola. She is involved in various bar associations and legal societies.

Judge Miller is considered to have a thorough understanding of the legal process in the Probate Division where she is currently assigned and is praised for her grasp of the legal issues. She is praised for her impartiality and for her courtroom management. She is considered to be a fair-minded judge with a good temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

15th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Anna Helen Demacopoulous

Paul O’Grady -- Qualified

Paul O’Grady was admitted to practice in 2000. He is currently the managing partner at a private law firm overseeing attorneys doing litigation. He also serves as Counsel for the Village of Tinley Park. He has also served a partner at Querrey & Harrow, Ltd, and before that was an Assistant General Counsel, General Counsel, and Chief of Staff for the Cook County Sheriff’s Office. He started his career as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney.

Mr. O’Grady has substantial litigation experience in both state and federal courts. He is considered to have good legal ability and a good demeanor. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Luciano Panici, Jr -- Qualified.

Luciano Panici, Jr. was admitted to practice in 2009 and has worked in a small law firm throughout his career doing municipal representation, civil defense of municipal clients, election law, criminal defense, and real estate. He is currently an Administrative Hearing Officer for five municipalities and is the village prosecutor for two municipalities. He has substantial litigation experience. He is reported to have good legal ability and temperament and is praised for his knowledge of the law. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Hon. Allen Walker -- Qualified

Judge Allen Walker was admitted to practice in 1987. He is currently serving as an Associate Judge and has been on the bench since 2012. He is currently assigned to the Chancery Division and has been there since 2020. He served in the Law Division between 2017 and 2020 and heard mortgage foreclosure cases from 2012 to 2017. He previously was a partner at Greene and Letts, where he focused on representing and advising individuals, for-profit and not-for-profit corporations, and municipal entities in litigation and transactional matters. He has been active as a teacher at the UIC law school in Chicago and at the Illinois Judicial Education Conference.

Judge Walker is praised for his grasp of legal issues and for his court management. He is reported to be well prepared and is fair to all parties before him. He is reported to have good judicial temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

15th Subcircuit

Vacancy of the Hon. Michael P. Toomin

Hon. John Fairman -- Qualified

Judge John Fairman was admitted to practice in 2003. He was elected as an Associate Judge in 2019 and was assigned until 2023 to Fifth Municipal District in Bridgeview. Prior to his current position, he served at the Daley Center. He is active in bar association and community activities. Prior to becoming a judge, he served as an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney for 4 years, and was then in private practice.

Judge Fairman is considered to have good legal ability and is a well respected jurist. He is reported to be well prepared and to have a good temperament – thoughtful, professional, and respectful. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

16th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of Lawrence E. Flood

Pedro Fregoso, Jr. – Not Recommended

Pedro Fregoso, Jr. did not participate in the evaluation process. The Council finds him Not Recommended for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

16th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of Maxwell Griffin

Cecilia Abundis – Not Recommended

Cecilia Abundis did not participate in the evaluation process. The Council finds her Not Recommended for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

17th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of Carmen K. Aguilar

Rivanda Doss Beal -- Qualified

Rivanda Doss Beal was admitted to practice in 1994 and spent most of her career as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney. Since 2021, she has served as a sole practitioner focusing on real estate closings, felony and misdemeanor criminal defense, and family law.

Ms. Beal is considered to have good legal ability and is exceptionally knowledgeable in the area of criminal law. She is reported to be fair-minded with a professional demeanor. She has substantial litigation experience and is praised for her litigation skills. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

17th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of Brian K. Flaherty

Hon. Lloyd Brooks – Qualified

Judge Lloyd Brooks was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2000. He is an Associate Judge currently assigned to the Chancery Division, Mortgage Foreclosure Mechanic’s Lien Section (since February 2023). Prior to his assignment in Chancery, he was in the Domestic Relations Division (2021-2023), First Municipal District Supplementary Proceedings (2019), and Traffic (2018-2019). He has served as a panelist on various legal issues and is a member of various bar associations and committees, including the Illinois Judges Association where he has served as a member of the Judicial Selection and Retention Committee and the Appellate Lawyers Association where he has been a member of the Rules Committee.

Judge Brooks is considered to be a very good judge and is praised for his patience, legal ability, and temperament. He explains his rulings and is even tempered on the bench. He is reported to be always well prepared. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

18th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of Lauren Gottainer Edidin

Hon. Jeffery George Chrones -- Qualified

Judge Jeffery George Chrones currently sits in the Second Municipal District in Skokie. He presides over traffic, misdemeanor, domestic violence, and municipal cases in the areas of commercial litigation, collections, evictions, and small claims. He also conducts emergency hearings for request for mental health writs. He was elected by the Circuit Judges to be an Associate Judge in 2018 and served in the First Municipal District at the Daley Center between 2018 and 2021 where he presided over traffic and misdemeanor cases. Between 2003 and 2018,

Judge Chrones was an attorney and partner with Johnson and Bell, Ltd., where he focused on commercial litigation matters. Between 1995 and 2003, he served as an Assistant Cook County States Attorney. From 1993 to 1995 he served as an Assistant Illinois Attorney General.

Judge Chrones, before becoming a judge, had substantial litigation experience in civil litigation matters. He was a well respected practitioner. Judge Chrones receives high marks on legal ability. He is reported by all the respondents to be well prepared for hearings and trials. He is praised for his grasp of evidentiary and procedure issues. He is reported generally to be thoughtful and thorough in his rulings and many respondents used the word “decisive” to describe him. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Hon. Sunil Bhawe -- Qualified

Judge Sunil Bhawe became a lawyer in 2004 and started his career with the Missouri Public Defender’s Office. He spent most of his career as an Assistant Attorney General for the Illinois Attorney General’s Office. He served as a trial lawyer in both state and federal courts. He became an Associate Judge in 2023.

Judge Bhawe is considered to have good legal ability and was a well respected practitioner before becoming a judge. He is reported to be well prepared and is praised for showing patience toward the persons appearing before him, while moving cases in a timely manner. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

18th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of James Linn

John Hock -- Qualified

John Hock was admitted to the Florida bar in 2007. He has been with the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office since 2022 and is assigned to the Special Litigation Unit where he manages a caseload of serious felony cases. He did civil litigation in Florida from 2007 to 2009. He then worked until 2011 for the Will County Public Defender’s Office. From 2011 to 2013, he worked for a private law firm doing civil litigation, and from 2013 to 2022 he worked for the Lake County Public Defender’s Office. He is considered to have good legal ability. He has substantial litigation experience in both civil and criminal law matters. He is reported to have a good temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Lynn Terese Palac -- Qualified

Lynn T. Palac was admitted to practice in 1999 and served as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney for 10 years before she left that office to do criminal defense work. She also is

employed by Catholic Charities where she provides training in domestic violence and domestic relations cases.

Lynn T. Palec is considered to have good legal ability and temperament. She is praised for her litigation skills. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

19th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of Robert E. Senechalle, Jr.

Risa Lanier -- Qualified

Risa Lanier was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1999. She has spent her entire career in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office where she has been a First Assistant State's Attorney since 2021. She is a member of various bar associations, including the Chicago Bar Association where she has served as Chair of the Judicial Evaluation Committee.

Risa Lanier is considered to have good legal ability. While some lawyers say that her temperament can be problematic on occasion, most lawyers praise her temperament, her law practice standards, and her litigation skills. The Council finds her to be Qualified for the Circuit Court.

David M. Heilmann -- Qualified

David M. Heilmann was admitted to practice in 1987. Since then, he has worked at Clausen Miller P.C. where he is now an equity partner. Mr. Heilmann also practices civil defense work in the areas of toxic tort, employment, and construction litigation.

Mr. Heilmann is considered to have good legal ability and temperament. He is reported to be a solid practitioner who is praised for his litigation skills and for being well-prepared. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Bridget Duignan -- Qualified

Bridget Duignan was admitted to practice in 2004. She is currently a partner in a firm, specializing personal injury and malpractice litigation. She is a former employee of the Illinois House of Representatives, as well as a former lawyer with several firms handling workers compensation and employment matters. She has authored articles in ISBA section publications.

Bridget Duignan is considered to have good legal ability and has substantial litigation experience in more complex matters. She is praised both for her litigation skills and for her systemic reform work with the Illinois legislature. She is reported to have very good temperament – focused and calm while in the midst of heated litigation. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Cook County Circuit Court

20th Subcircuit

Converted from the Associate Judgeship of Elizabeth M. Budzinski

Nickolas George Pappas – Qualified

Nickolas George Pappas was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1995. Since 2007, he has been President of Pappas Law Offices, P.C., a general legal practice where he handles criminal defense, civil litigation (municipal, law, chancery), administrative appeals and hearings, and other matters. He has also served as General Counsel to the Lakeland Healthcare Group, LLC (2012-2015) and as an Associate Attorney at Querrey & Harrow, Ltd. (2004-2007), a general litigation firm. From 2011-2012 and from 1996-2004, he worked for the Cook County State's Attorney Office, first as an Assistant State's Attorney where his assignments included First Municipal District, Fifth Municipal District, Felony Review, and the Felony Trial Division, and later as a Special State's Attorney representing the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. From 2008 to 2019, he provided pro bono legal services for refugee immigrant clients of Refugee One, a social service agency. He is a member of the Illinois State Bar Association.

Mr. Pappas is considered to have good legal ability. He has substantial litigation experience and is praised for his temperament. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

John Poulos – Not Recommended

John Poulos did not participate in the evaluation process. The Council finds him Not Recommended for the Circuit Court

Michael Zink -- Qualified

Michael Zink was admitted to practice in 2004. Since passing the bar, he has worked for a private law firm focusing on litigation matters in landlord-tenant, condominium, real estate, and bankruptcy matters. He has substantial litigation experience.

Michael Zink is considered to have good legal ability and knowledge. He is praised for his professionalism and for his work with the community. He is reported to have good litigation skills and has a calm demeanor. Mr. Zink is a well respected practitioner. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Nadine Jean Wichern -- Qualified

Nadine Jean Wichern was admitted to practice in 2000. Since 2015, she has served as the Chief of the Civil Appeals Division of the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. She began her

career at the Illinois Attorney General's Office and then from 2006 to 2011 she did appeals work in the Chicago Department of Law. She is considered to have very good legal ability, and is a well respected appellate lawyer. While she does not have direct trial experience, she advises trial lawyers in her office on issues which arise during trial, as well as other litigation issues. She is reported to have a good temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.