

# CHECK YOUR JUDGES

Your guide to Cook County's November 2022 judicial elections



**InjusticeWatch** 



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# Why you should check your judges

Judges are powerful officials whose choices on the bench touch many aspects of life, from traffic tickets to divorces, lawsuits, evictions, and criminal cases. They have the power to take someone's freedom, enforce or overturn state laws, and correct or perpetuate injustices. Yet there are few places to get information about the people running for judge. That's why Injustice Watch created this guide to the Nov. 8, 2022, Cook County judicial elections.

This year, 61 judges are running for retention in Cook County. Voters will be asked whether each judge should remain on the bench. A judge must receive 60% "yes" votes to keep their seat. (Voters in the northwest Cook County suburbs also will choose between a Democratic and Republican candidate for a vacant circuit court seat. All other candidates running for judicial vacancies are unopposed.)

Our team spent months researching each judge's legal experience, community involvement, political connections, conduct, and controversies. We sent every judge a survey asking how they've worked to counteract the disparities in the court system. And we collected recommendations from bar associations, groups of lawyers who interview and rate judicial candidates.

A condensed version of our findings, edited for space and clarity, appears here. For more detailed candidate profiles, visit [injusticewatch.org/judges](https://injusticewatch.org/judges).



▼ For more information about each candidate, scan the QR code or visit [injusticewatch.org/judges](https://injusticewatch.org/judges).

In English:



En español:



## WHAT TO KNOW

### Illinois' general election is Nov. 8.

Early voting in Chicago's 50 wards and sites around suburban Cook County starts Oct. 24 (or earlier in downtown Chicago). To find your polling place:

**City residents:** [www.chicagoelections.gov](https://www.chicagoelections.gov)

**Suburban Cook County residents:**  
[www.cookcountyclerkil.gov/elections](https://www.cookcountyclerkil.gov/elections)

### Who can vote?

Voters must be at least 18 years old, be a U.S. citizen, and reside in their precinct for at least 30 days prior to Election Day. People with felony convictions can vote in Illinois as long as they are not serving a felony sentence in prison or jail. People in jail pre-trial and people on mandatory supervised release are eligible to vote.

### 13th subcircuit voters will see additional race on their ballots

In Cook County's 13th subcircuit, which covers Palatine, Schaumburg, Barrington and Hanover townships and parts of Arlington Heights and Buffalo Grove in the far northwest suburbs, voters will choose between Republican Gary Seyring and Democrat Joe Gump, who won their respective primaries in June. For their profiles, see **Page 15**. Not sure if you live in the 13th subcircuit? Check your voter registration online or find it on your voter registration card.

# About the court system

## COURT LEVELS

Illinois has three levels of courts. **Circuit courts** are the front line of the legal system. Circuit court judges hear a variety of cases, from traffic tickets to personal injury to child welfare to criminal cases. They serve six-year terms. **Appellate courts** hear appeals of cases initially decided by the circuit courts, usually in panels of three judges. Appellate judges serve 10-year terms. Circuit court judges also can be temporarily assigned to the appellate court by the Illinois Supreme Court. The **Illinois Supreme Court** is the highest court in the state. Its seven justices serve 10-year terms, with three of the justices chosen by Cook County voters. In addition to ruling on cases appealed from the lower courts, the Supreme Court appoints judges to fill vacancies, creates rules that courts must follow, and oversees attorney licensing and discipline.

## DIVISIONS OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

The Cook County Circuit Court is made up of three departments, which oversee a total of 16 divisions, based on case type and geography.

### County Department

**Chancery division:** Handles lawsuits in which one party sues another to force them to stop or engage in a specific action. Cases involving mortgage foreclosures, contracts, and other matters also are heard here.

**County division:** Hears cases involving elections, adoptions, mental health proceedings, and real estate taxes.

**Criminal division:** Presides over felony cases, which are those that could result in a prison term of at least a year. This division also handles issues related to felony trials, including record expungement and petitions to review prior criminal convictions and sentences.

**Domestic relations division:** Hears cases involving divorce and family or child support matters.

**Domestic violence division:** Handles matters involving orders of protection, no-contact orders, and certain criminal cases related to domestic violence.

**Law division:** Focuses on lawsuits for monetary damages larger than \$30,000 in the city and larger than \$100,000 in the suburbs. Examples of cases include personal injury, medical malpractice, and property damage.

**Pretrial division:** Handles initial proceedings in criminal cases, such as bail hearings and applications for search warrants. This division also oversees some specialty programs, including the deferred prosecution court. This is the newest division of the court, created in 2017 when Chief Judge Timothy Evans issued an order reforming bail practices.

**Probate division:** Hears matters involving wills, estates, and guardianship of minors and/or those with disabilities.

### Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Department

**Child protection division:** Hears cases involving child abuse and neglect, termination of parental rights, and orders of protection concerning children.

**Juvenile justice division:** Conducts trials for minors charged with crimes and proceedings for minors addicted to alcohol or drugs and those who are runaways. Matters in this division are confidential.

### Municipal Department

The Municipal Department is divided into six geographical districts. Judges new to the bench are usually initially assigned to a municipal post, typically traffic court.

**First municipal district (Chicago):** This district handles felony preliminary hearings, misdemeanor cases, evictions, small claims, traffic, lawsuits seeking damages under \$30,000, marriages, and civil unions within the city.

**Second through sixth municipal districts:** These suburban districts handle the same types of cases as the first district, but also oversee felony criminal cases and juvenile justice cases, orders of protection, some specialty courts, lawsuits seeking damages under \$100,000, and name changes. These courts are located in Skokie, Rolling Meadows, Maywood, Bridgeview, and Markham.



## Understanding the candidate icons



Former prosecutor



Former public defender



Notable reversals



Past controversy



Negative ratings



Highly qualified ratings

**Former prosecutor:** This candidate has served as a prosecutor in criminal or quasi-criminal (such as traffic court) cases at the city, county, state, or federal level.

**Former public defender:** This candidate has served as a public defender, representing clients in criminal court who can't afford a private attorney.

**Notable reversals:** Notable cases exist where the candidate's decisions have been reversed by a higher court.

**Past controversy:** The candidate has been involved in some kind of personal or professional controversy.

**Negative ratings:** At least one bar association has said this candidate is not recommended or not qualified to be a judge. When available, we include information about why the bar association issued these ratings. Bar associations automatically rate candidates who don't participate in the ratings process as not recommended.

**Highly qualified ratings:** One or more bar associations have rated this candidate "well qualified" or "highly qualified." Not all bar associations give out ratings higher than qualified. But those that do have suggested that this candidate is particularly well-qualified for retention.

## Glossary of court and legal terms

**Administrative law judge:** Lawyers hired by city or state agencies to conduct hearings on administrative issues, such as municipal code violations or decisions made by agency representatives. May also be called "hearing officers." These are not judicial positions but are often a stepping stone for attorneys who want to gain quasi-judicial experience before running for judge.

**Appointment:** When a judge resigns, retires, or is removed from office, it creates a vacancy on the court. The Illinois Supreme Court appoints a replacement to serve until the next election.

**Assignment:** The Illinois Supreme Court can assign a circuit judge or retired judge to the appellate court for an indefinite term. There are currently six Cook County circuit judges assigned to the appellate court.

**Associate judge:** These judges serve the same roles as circuit judges, but they are selected by a vote of the circuit judges, rather than by the public.

**Assistant public defender:** Attorneys who represent criminal defendants who cannot afford an attorney and parents accused by the state of child abuse or neglect.

**Assistant state's attorney:** Attorneys who prosecute state crimes in the county and represent county departments and officials in civil lawsuits.

**Post-conviction:** Petitions filed by someone who has been convicted of a crime asking a judge to overturn their conviction or change their sentence. The bar for successfully filing a

post-conviction petition is extremely high and usually requires petitioners to show they have access to new evidence that could not have been available to them at the time of the original trial. Post-conviction petitions are different from appeals, which focus narrowly on challenges to judges' procedural decisions and interpretation of the law during a hearing or trial.

**Presiding judge:** Judges assigned by the chief judge to oversee administrative matters in each division and each municipal department. In some divisions, presiding judges are responsible for assigning cases to other judges. In other divisions, cases are assigned randomly by a computer. The presiding judges, along with Chief Judge Timothy Evans, are known as the Executive Committee and meet regularly to discuss courtwide matters.

**Pro se:** Latin for "on one's own behalf," pro se litigants appear in court without an attorney. Although people charged in criminal court are entitled to an attorney, litigants in civil lawsuits and people challenging their criminal convictions are not always entitled to representation.

**Reversal:** When a party in a case believes the judge made the wrong decision, they can appeal to a higher court. If the higher court believes that the judge misapplied the law or abused their discretion, it can reverse the judge's decision and send the case back with instructions. Usually cases get sent back to the same judge for corrections, but in rare circumstances higher courts order the cases to be transferred to a new judge.

Mary Jane Theis



Judge since: 1983

**Judicial experience:** Theis was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court in 2010 and elected in 2012. Theis takes over as chief justice on Oct. 26, following the retirement of Chief Justice Anne Burke. Theis became a judge in 1983, when she was selected as a Cook County associate judge. In 1988, she was elected as a circuit judge, where she served in the criminal and chancery divisions. She was appointed to the appellate court in 1993 and elected the following year.



**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant public defender (1974-1983)

**Law school:** University of San Francisco, 1974

**Notable:** Theis raised more than \$1.4 million in her 2012 campaign for the Supreme Court, more than double what her two competitors raised combined. She had the backing of then-Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who raised \$100,000 for her in a single fundraiser, according to the Chicago Tribune. Theis' father, Kenneth Wendt, was an Illinois state senator and Cook County circuit judge.

Theis has written several noteworthy decisions in her 12 years on the Illinois Supreme Court. In 2016, she wrote a unanimous decision striking down a Cook County tax on guns and ammunition. In 2014, she wrote a solo dissent arguing that the state's automatic transfer law, which requires teenagers charged with certain crimes to be tried as adults, should be abolished. "Illinois should be a place where youth matters, and we work to tailor punishment to fit the offense and the offender, as required by our federal and state constitutions," she wrote. However, in two separate cases since then involving juveniles who were given life sentences or de facto life sentences, she wrote decisions denying them resentencing hearings, saying that the trial court had properly considered the defendants' age when sentencing them. In 2018, Theis wrote a unanimous decision upholding a state law that bans people convicted of sex offenses involving children from any public park.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated her "highly qualified." The Illinois State Bar Association said she is regarded as "an outstanding jurist who knows civil and criminal law in great depth, asks thoughtful questions, and writes detailed opinions."

James Fitzgerald Smith



Judge since: 1989

**Judicial experience:** Fitzgerald Smith was selected as an associate judge in 1989 and elected as a circuit judge in 1994. He served in the Skokie courthouse, hearing both civil and criminal cases, and in the law division, hearing civil lawsuits seeking large monetary damages. He was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court in 2002.

**Previous experience:**

- City attorney and prosecutor for the city of Des Plaines (1979-1989)
- Assistant corporation counsel in the Chicago Law Department (1977-1979)
- Legal director, Rockford (1975-1977)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1975

**Notable:** Fitzgerald Smith served in the U.S. Army Reserves for 27 years, retiring in 1996 with the rank of colonel. As a circuit court judge, he received negative ratings from bar associations over issues with his temperament, but he has received positive ratings ever since joining the appellate court.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he "is widely praised for his legal ability and enjoys a reputation for having an excellent grasp of the issues coming before him."

**Terrence J. Lavin****Judge since:** 2010

**Judicial experience:** Lavin was appointed to the Illinois Appellate Court in 2010 and won election to his seat in 2012. Unusually, he did not serve as a circuit court judge before the Illinois Supreme Court appointed him to the appellate court.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice at several law firms, focused on personal injury, wrongful death, and medical negligence cases (1983-2009)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 1983

**Notable:** Last year, Lavin wrote an appeals court decision reinstating a \$1 million award for the family of David Strong, a 27-year-old Black man who was killed by Chicago police officers as he tried to flee a robbery in 2011. Although a jury had awarded damages to Strong's family in their wrongful death lawsuit against the city, the circuit judge nullified the award based on the jury's answer to two special interrogatories, which are questions posed to the jury about the facts of the case. Lavin wrote that the special interrogatories were "vague and confusing." The appellate court also said that John W. Givens and Leland Dudley, who suffered life-altering injuries in the police shooting and were charged with Strong's murder under the state's felony murder rule, could proceed with their civil lawsuit against the city. Attorneys for the city appealed the appellate court's ruling to the Illinois Supreme Court. The Supreme Court took up the city's appeal in January, and oral arguments on that appeal could take place as early as November.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said he "has an even-keeled temperament, high integrity, and issues well-reasoned opinions in a timely manner."

**Maureen E. Connors****Judge since:** 1988

**Judicial experience:** Connors was selected as an associate judge in 1988 and was elected as a circuit judge in 1994. She spent most of her time on the circuit court in the probate division hearing adult guardianship cases. She also served briefly

in the domestic violence division and the Bridgeview courthouse. She was appointed to the appellate court in 2010 and won election in 2012.

**Previous experience:**

- Assistant general attorney, Chicago Park District (1983-1988)
- Associate at Klafter and Burke, former law firm of Chicago Ald. Ed Burke (1979-1985)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 1979

**Notable:** Connors has written a number of notable decisions during her time on the appellate court. In 2014, she wrote a decision in a lawsuit by journalist Jamie Kalven against the City of Chicago, affirming that records of police misconduct investigations are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. In 2017, Connors, writing for a unanimous appellate panel, overturned a rule by Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart forbidding sheriff's office employees from affiliating with any current or former gang members, saying the sheriff needed to negotiate the regulation with the union representing deputies and correctional officers. The panel upheld a separate regulation prohibiting social media posts that were discriminatory, violent, harassing, or otherwise brought discredit on the department. Earlier this year, Connors dissented — without explanation — from an order releasing actor Jussie Smollett from jail while he appealed his conviction for faking a hate crime against himself. Connors said she couldn't comment on the Smollett case because it is still pending in the appellate court.

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, Irish Fellowship Club Educational and Cultural Foundation, a nonprofit that provides scholarships to Irish students at Catholic schools

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said, "She is praised overall for her judicial temperament and for the quality, thoroughness, and fairness of her written opinions."

**Mathias William Delort****Judge since:** 2007

**Judicial experience:** Delort was selected as an associate judge in 2007 and served in the chancery division of the Cook County Circuit Court, where he presided over mortgage foreclosure cases. He was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court

in 2012.

**Previous experience:**

- Worked in private practice on election law cases and represented local governments, pension boards, and public school districts (1985-2007)
- Served as an administrative hearing officer for several suburban villages and for the Chicago Board of Elections, Illinois State Board of Elections, and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (1987-2007)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1985

**Notable:** In 2016, Delort was part of a three-judge panel that overturned an injunction that had blocked the release of decades of citizen complaints against Chicago police officers. Delort and the two other appellate judges ruled that the Freedom of Information Act superceded the Fraternal Order of Police's collective bargaining agreement, which specified that complaints over 4 years old should be destroyed.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers found him well qualified for retention and said he is "a highly respected jurist who is considered to have excellent legal ability."

**Nathaniel Roosevelt Howse, Jr.****Judge since:** 1998

**Judicial experience:** Howse was assigned to the appellate court in 2009 and elected in 2012. He was first elected to the Cook County Circuit Court in 1998 and served primarily in the county division, hearing real estate tax and election cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on civil rights and election cases (1976-1998)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1976

**Notable:** As an attorney, Howse represented the Harold Washington Party in their efforts to fight ballot challenges and worked on lawsuits about voting rights and ballot access. Howse ran unsuccessfully for the Illinois Supreme Court in 2020, placing last in a seven-way race. Many of his top donors in that race were personal injury attorneys and firms.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated him well qualified and said, "His written opinions are praised

as being well written, well reasoned, and thorough."

**Jesse G. Reyes****Judge since:** 1997**Judicial experience:**

Reyes first joined the bench as a Cook County associate judge in 1997. He was elected as a circuit judge in 2008. He primarily served in the circuit court's chancery division, hearing mortgage foreclosure cases. Reyes was elected to the appellate court in 2012.

**Previous experience:**

- Assistant attorney, Chicago Board of Education (1996-1997)
- Assistant corporation counsel, City of Chicago Law Department (1985-1996)

**Notable:** Reyes was the first Latino man elected to the Illinois Appellate Court. He came in second place in a seven-way race for an Illinois Supreme Court seat in 2020, losing to Justice P. Scott Neville Jr.

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1982

**Community involvement:**

- Advisory board member, A Safe Haven, an organization that serves people experiencing homelessness

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he's known "to be well prepared at oral argument, and his opinions are reported to be well written and well reasoned."

▼ For more information about each candidate, scan the QR code or visit [injusticewatch.org/judges](https://www.injusticewatch.org/judges).





**Sophia H. Hall****Judge since:** 1980

**Judicial experience:** Hall was elected to the circuit court in 1980. Since January, she has been the interim acting presiding judge of the chancery division. She is also the administrative presiding judge of the resource section of the juvenile justice and child protection department of the circuit court. This section does public outreach on issues related to juvenile court. Previously, Hall was the presiding judge of the juvenile division and served in the criminal division.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney at two firms focused on civil matters, including personal injury, divorce, and civil rights cases (1967-1980)

**Law school:** Northwestern University, 1967

**Notable:** Hall was the first woman to serve as a presiding judge in Cook County when she was appointed presiding judge of the juvenile division in 1992. In 2020, Hall upheld a decision by the Chicago Police Board to fire officer Ricardo Viramontes for lying about details from the night Laquan McDonald was murdered. In 2021, Hall ruled that the Trump hotel in Chicago violated environmental laws by sucking too much water out of the Chicago River, killing too many fish.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said she has “an excellent judicial demeanor” and “demonstrates a devotion to diversity, inclusion, and equity.”

**Timothy C. Evans****Judge since:** 1992

**Judicial experience:** Evans was first elected to the bench in 1992. He served as the presiding judge of the domestic relations and law divisions before being elected chief judge by his peers in 2001. In 2022, he was re-elected as chief judge for a record eighth term.

**Previous experience:**

- Chicago alderman, 4th Ward (1973-1991), including floor leader for Mayor Harold Washington
- City of Chicago assistant corporation counsel
- Attorney in private practice

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1969**Notable:** Evans’s historically long tenure

as chief judge, overseeing a court system of some 400 judges and more than 2,600 employees, has been marked by both progress and controversy. Since his last retention election in 2016, Evans has overseen the creation of restorative justice courts and ordered bond court reforms that require judges to account for someone’s ability to pay when setting bail. More recently, Evans responded to advocates’ calls to make emergency restraining orders available to victims of domestic violence 24/7, and worked with legal aid groups to implement a legal assistance program for people with eviction and debt cases.

However, Evans also has continued to oversee a court bureaucracy marred by a lack of transparency and accountability, particularly within its probation department. His administration has been in the crosshairs of lawsuits by former employees over workplace discrimination as well as by probationers alleging staff misconduct. Most notably, the county paid more than \$100,000 to settle two federal civil rights lawsuits filed by men who alleged that a group of probation officers had teamed up with Chicago police and the FBI to illegally raid their homes. In the wake of the lawsuit, Evans dismissed a probation department supervisor who is continuing to wage a legal battle over his termination. In a statement, Evans said, “In no such case filed by a former employee has a judge or jury found that the chief judge committed acts of unlawful employment discrimination.”

Evans also has overseen a juvenile detention center in which kids have increasingly been confined to their rooms. In recent months, a committee of experts hand-picked by Evans issued a report that called the juvenile jail “isolating and deprivational” and recommended that it be dismantled. The committee also bemoaned the fact that recommendations it made to Evans about the detention center in 2016 had apparently not been implemented. In a statement, Evans said he “supports the meritorious proposals to replace the JTDC or provide suitable, community-based detention alternatives.”

In 2021, Evans’s office also allowed a contract with a private company that has provided alcohol-monitoring devices to hundreds of Cook County defendants and probationers to lapse while judges continued to order people to wear, and pay for, the devices. Evans said he welcomed suggestions from some county commissioners at a recent hearing that the county should pay the fees for the device for defendants who can’t afford it.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated him highly qualified. The Illinois State Bar Association said

he “was praised for his efforts to improve diversity on the bench and for his support of diversion courts, like the restorative justice programs and drug, mental health, and veterans courts.”

**Charles Patrick Burns****Judge since:** 1998

**Judicial experience:** Burns was elected as a circuit judge in 1998. He is currently assigned to the criminal division, where he hears felony cases and presides over the Rehabilitative Alternative Probation (RAP) drug court programs. He previously heard criminal and traffic cases in the Maywood courthouse.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant state’s attorney, including eight years as a supervisor in various units (1981-1998)
- Adjunct professor, Lewis University (2008-present)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1981

**Notable:** *This section contains graphic content that some may find disturbing.*

In recent years, Burns’ stewardship of the RAP court programs has won him wide-ranging praise and has earned a mentor court designation from the National Drug Court Institute. Local media has noted that he gives out his personal cell phone number to program participants and has initiated partnerships with local organizations to connect participants with rental subsidy vouchers, expungement of past criminal records, credit repair, and job placement.

From 1994 to 1997, Burns was the supervisor of the felony review unit of the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office. In this role he oversaw the prosecutors tasked with approving felony charges against people arrested by Chicago police and other local law enforcement agencies. In 2017, the Chicago Tribune published accusations that Burns pressured his staff attorneys to “give the detectives whatever they wanted.” The accusations came from an FBI interview with a disgraced former subordinate of Burns who accepted false confessions made by the ultimately exonerated Englewood Four. In a statement, Burns said the allegations published by the Tribune were “singular and uncorroborated” and that the former assistant state’s attorney was a “terminated, discredited former ASA who is a convicted felon sex offender.”

Since his last retention election, Burns has presided over several high-profile cases, including that of ex-Northwestern University

professor Wyndham Lathem, whom Burns sentenced to 53 years for the 2017 murder of Trenton Cornell-Duranleau. Burns’ decisions have been reversed by the appellate court in whole or in part 40 times since 2016, significantly more than other judges in the criminal division. Most recently, the appellate court reversed his denial of a post-conviction petition filed by Kimberlyn Bolaños, whom Burns allowed to plead guilty to the stabbing murder of her infant son even though she had a documented history of mental illness. Bolaños also had inflicted dozens of stab wounds on herself on the day she killed her baby. She gouged out her own eyes shortly after beginning her 38-year prison sentence. In 2019, Bolaños filed a pro se post-conviction petition, saying her mental illness prevented her from making an informed decision about the plea deal. Burns rejected the petition, but the appellate court reversed his decision and ordered him to hold a hearing to consider the petition.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said nearly all their attorneys “praised his knowledge of criminal law and the rules of evidence and procedure.” However, a few attorneys said, “He could at times be irascible, and several female attorneys raised concerns over what they perceived to be inadequate attention to sensitivity.”

**John Patrick Kirby****Judge since:** 1998**Judicial experience:**

Kirby was elected judge in 1998. He currently serves in the law division and previously presided over felony cases in the criminal division.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant state’s attorney, prosecuting felony and misdemeanor cases

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1983

**Notable:** Kirby started two diversion programs aimed at addressing underlying conditions veterans and young people charged with crimes face. He began the Veterans Treatment Court in 2009 and started a virtual high school in the Cook County Jail for young people to attain a high school diploma.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he is well qualified and highlighted his efforts in his previous assignment to use alternative sentencing for young defendants.

**LeRoy K. Martin, Jr.****Judge since:** 2002

**Judicial experience:** Martin was appointed to the circuit court in 2002. He was first elected in 2004. He served in the domestic relations and chancery divisions before Chief Judge Timothy Evans made him presiding judge of the criminal division in 2015. In that role, he was responsible for assigning felony cases, hearing motions for expungements and certificates of innocence, and setting policies and practices for the criminal court. The Illinois Supreme Court assigned Martin to the appellate court in 2021.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on criminal defense and civil cases (1987-2002)
- Cook County assistant public defender (1985-1987)

**Law school:** North Carolina Central University, 1984

**Notable:** Martin is the son of LeRoy Martin Sr., who served as Chicago police superintendent from 1987 to 1992. His son, LeRoy Martin III, is a Cook County assistant state's attorney. Martin was the first Black presiding judge of the Cook County Circuit Court's criminal division.

In 2019, Martin denied former Chicago detective Dante Servin's request to expunge his criminal record. Servin was charged and later acquitted of manslaughter in the off-duty killing of Rekia Boyd, after the judge in that case determined that murder charges would have been more appropriate. That same year, he expunged the record of detective David March, who was acquitted on charges of filing a false report in the Laquan McDonald shooting.

In another noteworthy decision, Martin denied certificates of innocence to several people who were framed by disgraced former Chicago police Sgt. Ronald Watts, saying they did not qualify because they had been sentenced only to probation and had not served time in prison. In handing down his decision, he said he would "be OK with the appellate



court reversing" his ruling, which it later did.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he is well prepared and "is a well-respected jurist both as a trial judge and as an appellate justice."

**Robert "Bob" Balanoff****Judge since:** 2004

**Judicial experience:** Balanoff was elected judge in 2004. He has served in the child protection division for most of his judicial career and, since 2020, has been the presiding judge of the division.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on bankruptcy, probate, real estate, and Social Security Disability matters (1982-2004)

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1982

**Notable:** Balanoff is part of a progressive political family from Chicago's Southeast Side with roots in the labor movement. His mother, Miriam Balanoff, is a former Cook County circuit judge and state representative. His brother, Clem Balanoff, is a former state representative and political consultant, and his first cousin, Tom Balanoff, recently retired after a lengthy tenure as president of SEIU Local 1. Bob Balanoff's son, Dan Balanoff, ran unsuccessfully for a judicial vacancy this year.

As presiding judge of the child protection division, Balanoff created a special court call for foster care children who are being held in psychiatric facilities or the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center past their recommended discharge date solely because the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services can't find a placement for them. He also extended a program allowing those children to receive court-appointed child advocates.

**Community involvement:**

- Monitor for elections in Eastern Europe, including Azerbaijan, Macedonia, Ukraine, the Republic of Georgia, and Moldova,



through the U.S. State Department and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said he was "highly praised by attorneys and judges for his legal knowledge and his technology skills during the transition to Zoom hearings during the pandemic." The Chicago Council of Lawyers said as presiding judge, he "is praised for listening to advocates for reform ideas."

**Kathleen Marie Burke****Judge since:** 2004

**Judicial experience:** Burke was elected judge in 2004. She currently serves in the Bridgeview courthouse, hearing a variety of matters. She previously served in the child protection division.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant state's attorney, representing county-run hospitals in medical malpractice cases (1993-2004)
- Attorney at a mid-sized law firm focused on medical malpractice cases (1989-1992)
- Adjunct faculty at Loyola University Chicago School of Law (2000-present)

**Law school:** University of Notre Dame, 1989

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said she "makes thoughtful decisions" and is "considered to be a fair person who treats all with respect."

**Thomas J. Kelley****Judge since:** 2004

**Judicial experience:** Kelley was elected to the circuit court as a Republican in 2004. He currently serves in the domestic relations division in the Rolling Meadows courthouse.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney at his family's Schaumburg-based



law firm of Kelley, Kelley, and Kelley, focused on divorce cases (1984-2004)

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1984

**Notable:** Before becoming an attorney, Kelley was a certified public accountant. Kelley's brother, Martin C. Kelley, is also a Cook County circuit judge in Rolling Meadows.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he is praised for his courtroom management. "He has a patient demeanor, allows the parties to have their say but controls his call," the council wrote.

**Clare Elizabeth McWilliams****Judge since:** 2004

**Judicial experience:** McWilliams was elected to the circuit court in 2004. She is currently assigned to the law division, where she presides over civil trials. She also has supervised the county's asbestos case docket since 2013.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice, specializing in family law.

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1988

**Notable:** In 2014, McWilliams was subpoenaed to serve as a character witness for Robert M. Voltl, a former real estate lawyer, who had been disbarred after he was convicted of mortgage fraud. McWilliams told a panel that was deciding whether to reinstate Voltl's law license that she had known him for 25 years and that, when she was a lawyer, she had found him to be honest and trustworthy.

In 2016, McWilliams ruled that plaintiffs in sexual abuse lawsuits against former Chicago-area priest Daniel McCormack could pursue punitive damages against the Archdiocese of Chicago.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said attorneys find her "well prepared with excellent legal knowledge, and they praised her well-reasoned decisions in complex matters."

**MORE ONLINE****Check out our digital judicial election guide**

To read more information about each candidate, scan the QR code or visit [injusticewatch.org/judges](https://injusticewatch.org/judges).





**Mary Lane Mikva** **Judge since:** 2004

**Judicial experience:** Mikva was elected to the Cook County Circuit Court in 2004. She served in the chancery and child protection divisions. She has been assigned to the Illinois Appellate Court since 2016.

**Previous experience:**

- Partner at a small law firm focused on employment law (1991-2004)
- Attorney with the City of Chicago Law Department focused on appeals (1987-1991)
- Attorney at several small firms focused on employment and civil rights law (1982-1987)
- Law clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr.

**Law school:** Northwestern University, 1980

**Notable:** Mikva is the daughter of Abner Mikva, a former U.S. representative and federal appeals court judge, who died in 2016. She is part of a group of judges working on making recommendations about how to implement the Pretrial Fairness Act, which will abolish cash bail across Illinois starting in January.

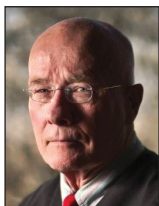
**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Mikva Challenge, the nonprofit started by her parents that focuses on youth civic education and participation.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers found her to be well qualified and noted that “she is respectful to those appearing before her, and her written opinions are considered thoughtful and well reasoned.”

**Patrick T. Murphy****Judge since:** 2004

**Judicial experience:** Murphy was elected judge in 2004. He currently serves in the child protection division, hearing cases related to abuse and neglect. He previously served in the domestic relations division.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County public guardian, an appointed position overseeing the office of attorneys that represent children in custody or abuse and neglect cases, and people with disabilities in guardianship proceedings (1978-2004)

- Assistant director, National Legal Aid and Defender Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing defense to low-income people accused of crimes
- Attorney in private practice focused on criminal defense, mental health, and civil rights cases
- Adjunct professor, University of Chicago law school, IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, DePaul University, and Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies

**Law school:** Northwestern University, 1964

**Notable:** Murphy has a record as an outspoken critic of the child welfare system. This year, he has held the director of the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services in contempt of court at least 12 times between January and September for the agency’s failure to meet court-ordered deadlines to relocate children in its care from psychiatric hospitals and shelters to more permanent and supportive living situations, CBS Chicago reported. He has written two books documenting the failures of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

In 1971, Murphy successfully argued a case before the U.S. Supreme Court challenging Illinois’ guardianship statute, which at the time said that children of an unmarried mother were automatically deemed wards of the state when the mother died, even if their father was present in their lives. The ruling established that a hearing on the fitness of another parent is required before children are deemed wards of the state.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said Murphy is “exceptionally knowledgeable about abuse and neglect law” and is “well respected for trying to find ways to return a child to the family with safeguards.”

**Jim Ryan**  **Judge since:** 2004

**Judicial experience:** Ryan was elected to the circuit court in 2004. He currently serves in the first municipal division, hearing jury trials.

**Previous experience:**

- Director of operations and general counsel, Cook County Sheriff’s Office (1995-2004)
- Cook County assistant state’s attorney (1993-1995)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1992

**Notable:** In 2005, Ryan gave a deposition in a civil lawsuit related to mass beatings by guards at the Cook County Jail in 1999. A

special grand jury had determined that there was evidence that jail guards had beaten inmates and that higher-ups in the sheriff’s office had covered it up. Ryan pleaded the Fifth Amendment to almost every question asked of him, including factual questions about the date he was elected judge, the Chicago Tribune reported. Ryan declined to comment to Injustice Watch.

In 2010, an investigation by Fox 32 Chicago and the Better Government Association claimed that four Cook County judges, including Ryan, were stealing time and going home early. In the first episode of the four-part series, the station showed Ryan’s alleged car in the driveway of his alleged home before the end of the workday. Ryan called Fox to tell them that wasn’t his home or car. The following night, Fox issued an on-air correction, saying that they watched Ryan leave the courthouse early three separate times, but that the house and car belonged to a neighbor, not him. Ryan subsequently filed a defamation suit against Fox 32 and the BGA, which was settled in 2014 for an undisclosed amount.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said he is regarded to run “a very tight and efficient court,” and that he is “impartial, ethical, and diligent.”

**Thaddeus L. Wilson**  **Judge since:** 2007

**Judicial experience:** Wilson was appointed judge in 2007 and re-appointed in 2008 after losing that year’s election. He was elected to his first full term as a circuit judge in 2010. He has spent the majority of his time on the bench in the criminal division but moved to the chancery division in December 2021.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in a private practice with Chicago Ald. Howard Brookins Jr., representing clients in criminal, civil, and bankruptcy cases (1994-2007)
- Adjunct professor at John Marshall Law School (2010-2011, 2014-2016)

**Law school:** Northern Illinois University, 1994

**Notable:** Attorneys who spoke to Injustice Watch said Wilson is widely regarded as knowledgeable on the law and meticulous in running his courtroom, and they praised his leadership in transitioning to virtual court proceedings at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. But some attorneys

also said that he can be excessively punitive, temperamental, and inflexible. Notably, at the start of the pandemic, he was criticized for jailing a man charged with probation violations for a low-level felony on a \$475,000 bond, the Chicago Tribune reported. In a statement, Wilson pointed out that the man had a years-long history of probation violations by the time he jailed him in February 2020. “The record shows that I was more than fair and patient in trying to get him the treatment that he needed and to get him to comply with the terms of his Intensive Drug Probation,” Wilson said. He eventually released him on electronic monitoring in May 2020.

In 2016, he imposed a 100-year sentence on a man convicted of felony murder and attempted murder for providing his teenaged niece with the gun she ended up firing during a fight, killing a 14-year-old and injuring another teenager. The appellate court later reversed the conviction, saying that Wilson improperly allowed prosecutors to misrepresent to the jury what was needed to prove a felony murder conviction. The man ultimately pleaded guilty to a reduced charge and received a 20-year sentence. In a statement, Wilson said that the original sentence he imposed was within the sentencing range for murder and attempted murder and that he was required by law to impose consecutive sentences. He also noted that the appellate court found that there was sufficient evidence to convict the man.

The attorneys who spoke with Injustice Watch said they welcomed Wilson’s reassignment last year to the chancery division. In his statement, Wilson wrote, “It should not be a shock or news flash to any judge that there are some attorneys who don’t like them for some reason or another. Just like it should come as no surprise that there are school teachers, professors, and news reporters that some people just don’t like and wish were gone.”

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said he “is described as fair, diligent, and sensitive to diversity,” and that “attorneys consider him to be very knowledgeable on the law and as someone who stays up to date on current law.”

**Daniel James Pierce**

Pierce retired from the bench in September and withdrew from the retention election, but due to the timing his name may still appear on some ballots. Votes for or against Pierce will not be counted.

**William H. Hooks****Judge since:** 2008**Judicial experience:**

Hooks was appointed to the bench in 2008 and was elected to his first term as circuit judge in 2010. He is currently assigned to the criminal division, where he hears felony cases at the George Leighton Criminal Courthouse and also presides over a veterans specialty court.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on criminal defense and civil litigation (1996-2008)
- Hearing board chair and commissioner, Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (1994-2007)
- Attorney at several firms focused mainly on insurance defense cases (1985-1996)
- Judge advocate with the U.S. Marine Corps (1981-1985)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 1981

**Notable:** Hooks has a record as a critic of police and prosecutorial misconduct. Prior to becoming a judge, as the head of the Cook County Bar Association, Hooks had advocated for the removal of Associate Judge John “Jack” Hynes from the bench. Hynes, a former assistant state’s attorney, had failed to disclose that two convictions in murder cases he had prosecuted had been reversed because the appellate court found that he had discriminated against African Americans during jury selection. In 2016, Hooks was featured in a Chicago Tribune story for taking a strong stance in several cases against police officers whom he believed were lying in their testimony in front of him. He has presided over the postconviction proceedings of three men who alleged that they were tortured at the hands of Jon Burge and detectives working under him. Hooks threw out the coerced confessions that had originally led to the murder convictions of Eric Caine, Anthony Jakes, and Jackie Wilson.

Hooks has handled other high-profile cases in recent years, including that of four young people charged with hate crimes and kidnapping for an assault on a disabled classmate that was live-streamed on Facebook. He was criticized for giving a 10-day jail sentence to the driver who killed cyclist Bobby Cann in 2013. In an email, Hooks said that he accepted a plea deal that was agreed to by prosecutors and the defense, and that he didn’t recall Cann’s family opposing the sentence. “The

disposition included some period of jail time, a fine higher than one I have ever before imposed, and a long period of probation which was ended successfully without any violations whatsoever,” Hooks wrote.

Hooks has been criticized for his temperament. In October 2018, he was referred to anger management and removed from his felony court call for three months for behaving “in such a manner that created a hostile work environment for another judge,” according to the Office of the Chief Judge. The chief judge’s office did not provide details about the incident that led to his reassignment. In an email, Hooks noted that the Judicial Inquiry Board, which hears complaints of judicial misconduct, did not take any action against him in this case.

In 2009, during his first run for the circuit court, Hooks received a \$10,000 campaign donation from International Profit Associates, a company that had been sued earlier that year by the Illinois Attorney General’s Office for alleged fraud and was embroiled in a years-long federal sexual harassment lawsuit by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. A federal judge later ordered the company to pay an \$8 million settlement to 82 women who faced persistent workplace sexual harassment by the company’s senior executives. While other Illinois public officials who had received donations from the company (including former Gov. Rod Blagojevich and former comptroller Dan Hynes) returned them, Hooks did not. Asked why, Hooks referred Injustice Watch to a former campaign committee member who said Hooks was not informed at the time of his campaign donors’ identities.

**Community involvement:**

- Mentor, University of Chicago’s Office for Military-Affiliated Communities, which supports veterans affiliated with the university

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by most bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said Hooks is praised for his legal knowledge, has a reputation for being a mentor to lawyers and other judges, and said “most lawyers praise his judicial temperament.” But the Illinois State Bar Association said some attorneys said Hooks “could be disrespectful and arrogant at times, especially towards women attorneys.”

**Thomas V. Lyons****Judge since:** 2008**Judicial experience:**

Lyons was appointed to the circuit court in 2008 by the Illinois Supreme Court, and elected in 2010. He currently serves in the law division, hearing jury trials seeking large monetary damages.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney at a personal injury law firm concentrating on aviation accident cases (2005-2008)
- Cook County assistant state’s attorney, both as a prosecutor in criminal cases and as an attorney defending the county and elected officials in civil cases (1986-2005)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1986

**Notable:** Lyons’ father, Thomas G. Lyons, was a longtime Illinois state senator, 45th Ward Democratic committeeperson, and chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party.

**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Misericordia Heart of Mercy, a nonprofit dedicated to providing housing and services to people with developmental and intellectual disabilities
- Volunteer, Blessed Sacrament Youth Center, a club providing after-school tutoring and activities for youth in North Lawndale

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers found him well qualified and said he is described as “hardworking” and is “patient and fair to all parties.”

**Daniel Malone****Judge since:** 2009**Judicial experience:**

Malone was appointed to the bench in 2009 and elected a circuit judge in 2010. He is currently the presiding judge of the probate division, where he handles pretrial hearings and all mediation for the division.

**Previous experience:**

- Practiced at a private firm specializing in personal injury matters, product liability, and medical negligence cases

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1986

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago

Council of Lawyers said he is “praised for being prepared and for being fair to all litigants.”

**Geary W. Kull****Judge since:** 2009**Judicial experience:**

Kull was appointed to the circuit court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2009. He was elected in 2010. He currently serves in the Maywood courthouse hearing felony cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice at his own firm, focused on criminal defense and civil rights cases (1981-2009)
- Cook County assistant public defender (1975-1981)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1974

**Notable:** Kull has been reversed by the appellate court seven times since 2018. In at least two of the cases, Kull’s faulty memory of presented evidence was at issue. In a 2020 appellate decision, the court overturned Kull’s conviction of a man for first-degree murder that was based solely on an isolated statement the man made to detectives — which Kull believed proved that he had advance knowledge of a shooting — but in fact was about his determination afterward that a shooting had taken place. In a second 2020 case that involved a defendant’s claim for ineffective assistance of counsel, the appellate court found that Kull relied on a mischaracterization of the evidence and then later admitted to not remembering the evidence altogether. “We find this to be incredibly dismissive and incredulously disingenuous on the part of” Kull, the court wrote. In a third 2020 appellate decision, the court reversed a man’s murder conviction after finding that Kull should have allowed the defendant’s lawyer to question a Maywood detective about the department’s policy on preserving notes in a murder investigation after the detective testified that he had destroyed his field notes in the case after they were subpoenaed by the defense. Kull said he couldn’t comment because two of the cases were still pending.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated him well qualified. The Illinois State Bar Association noted that attorneys “gave him high marks for his legal knowledge and ability, his sensitivity to diversity, fairness, and diligence.”



**Steven James Bernstein****Judge since:** 2010**Judicial experience:**

Bernstein was elected in 2010 and currently serves in the juvenile justice division, hearing cases of minors charged with crimes or addicted to drugs or alcohol.

**Previous experience:**

- Acting general counsel for the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, a state agency that administers grants and conducts research on criminal justice issues (2006-2009)
- Evanston Township assessor (1991-1997) and Fourth Ward alderperson (1997-2009)
- Worked in private practice with his wife, former Circuit Judge Jeanne Cleveland Bernstein, specializing in criminal defense, civil rights, zoning, and real estate cases. (1974-2006)

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1971

**Notable:** In 2016, an appellate court panel found that Bernstein had failed to press prosecutors for race-neutral reasons for excluding four Black potential jurors from a case involving a Black 17-year-old charged with residential burglary. The appellate court sent the case back to Bernstein, who held a hearing and determined that prosecutors had a sufficient race-neutral reason for excluding the jurors. The case went back to the appellate court, which determined that the state's reason for excluding one of the jurors was pretextual and ordered a new trial. Bernstein declined to comment on the case.

**Community involvement:**

- Advisory council member, Northlight Theatre

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said, "He is praised for being empathetic to juveniles who appear before him, even when he is stern with parents or representatives of government agencies appearing in his courtroom."

**Bonita Coleman****Judge since:** 2010**Judicial experience:**

Coleman was elected judge in 2010. She serves in the domestic relations division, hearing divorce, child custody, and domestic violence cases in the Markham courthouse.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on divorce and child custody cases as well as criminal, probate, and real estate law (1992-2010)
- Hearing officer, Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission

**Law school:** University of Iowa

**Notable:** Coleman was found not qualified by the Chicago Council of Lawyers in 2010 and 2016. In 2016, the council said "many lawyers question Judge Coleman's knowledge of the law" and noted "there was a mixed response to whether she is fair to both men and women who appear before her." But this year, the council found her qualified for retention.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said, "She has a good temperament and is particularly patient with self-represented litigants." But the council also noted that "some lawyers say she can be dismissive of domestic violence allegations — that she requires an excessive amount of evidence before she will order protections for alleged victims of abuse."

**Ann Finley Collins****Judge since:** 2010**Judicial experience:**

Collins was elected judge in 2010 and retained in 2016. She currently serves in the Maywood courthouse, hearing misdemeanor, traffic, bond court, and some felony cases. She previously served in the chancery division.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant public defender (1985-2010)
- Teacher in Oakland, California (1970-1981)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 1985

**Notable:** From 2013 to 2020, prosecutors asked to substitute Collins as the judge in drunken-driving cases more than a dozen times, according to reporting by Injustice Watch and the Better Government Association. The moves came after a court-watchers group appealed to the chief judge following several acquittals and pretrial rulings favorable to defendants by Collins in drunken-driving cases. In a 2016 case, Collins granted a man's motion to quash his traffic stop during a DUI enforcement roadblock, saying the seizure and arrest violated the Fourth Amendment because a press release sent out before the roadblock did not include the precise date and time it would occur.

But an appellate court reversed her decision, saying it was "erroneous as a matter of law" because the Illinois Supreme Court had previously ruled that providing the precise location of a roadblock beforehand was not required. Collins declined to comment.

**Bar association ratings:** Collins did not participate in the bar association evaluation process, so she was found not recommended. In an emailed statement, she said she was planning to retire at the time of the evaluations but later changed her mind.

**Daniel J. Gallagher****Judge since:** 2010**Judicial experience:**

Gallagher was elected judge in 2010 and currently serves in the first municipal district, hearing misdemeanor cases on the West Side of Chicago.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant public defender for 13 years

**Law school:** University of Notre Dame, 1993

**Notable:** In 2018, Gallagher acquitted Chicago police officer Robert Rialmo of battery charges related to a bar fight. Rialmo was already on paid administrative leave for the 2016 shooting of Quintonio LeGrier and Bettie Jones. He was fired the following year. In 2022, Gallagher acquitted a woman of two misdemeanors after she was accused of driving over a neighbor family's garden and damaging a car in retaliation for their criticisms of northwest side Ald. Jim Gardiner.

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said attorneys praised Gallagher for his "thorough understanding of the legal process" and his "ability to manage his court call."

**Linzey D. Jones****Judge since:** 2010**Judicial experience:**

Jones was elected judge in 2010. He currently serves in the Bridgeview courthouse.

**Previous experience:**

- Partner at a small law firm focused on labor and employment law (2003-2010)

- Village president, Olympia Fields (1997-2010)
- Associate and partner at Sidley Austin, a large law firm (1982-2003)

**Law school:** University of Illinois, 1982

**Notable:** Jones is the son of Linzey D. Jones Sr. and Dianne Ruth Jones, who were involved in the civil rights and labor movements in the 1950s and 1960s. Dianne Jones led efforts to desegregate Chicago's Rainbow Beach and, as a teacher in Harvey, helped establish one of the first teachers unions in Illinois. Linzey Jones Sr. led sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters in Urbana-Champaign, was the first Black person elected to serve as the chair of the grievance committee for the United Steelworkers of America Local 65, and went on to become a lawyer representing injured workers.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he's able "to handle his call with good court management skills and is respectful to those appearing before him."

**Susan Kennedy Sullivan****Judge since:** 2010**Judicial experience:**

Sullivan was elected judge in 2010. She currently serves in the probate division, hearing cases involving estates of people with disabilities. Sullivan previously heard cases involving guardianship of juveniles and elder law cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice specializing in elder law and probate cases (1994-2010)
- Adjunct professor, DePaul University College of Law, teaching an elder law course (1998-2017)
- Registered nurse in Washington, D.C.; New York; and Chicago (1974-1992)

**Law school:** DePaul University College of Law, 1994

**Notable:** Sullivan ran unsuccessfully for the appellate court in 2014. She is married to retired Circuit Judge Daniel J. Sullivan.

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, Woodlands Academy of the Sacred Heart, an all-girls Catholic boarding school in Lake Forest, Illinois

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said she is "praised for showing empathy toward litigants," and her rulings have been described as "thoughtful."

**Terry MacCarthy** **Judge since:** 2010**Judicial experience:**

MacCarthy was elected to the bench in 2010. He is currently assigned to the domestic violence division in the Maywood courthouse, where he hears civil orders of protection and criminal domestic violence cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant public defender, including seven years as a supervisor in the felony trial unit (1991-2010)
- Adjunct professor, DePaul University College of Law and University of Chicago Mandel Legal Aid Clinic

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1990

**Notable:** MacCarthy's father, Terence F. MacCarthy, was the longtime head of the federal public defender's office in Chicago.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said attorneys praised him for "his knowledge, fairness, patience, and diligence."

**Sandra Gisela Ramos**  **Judge since:** 2010

**Judicial experience:** Ramos was elected judge in 2010. She currently serves in the law division trial section, hearing lawsuits seeking large monetary damages. Ramos previously heard criminal cases in the first municipal district.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice, specializing in criminal defense
- Cook County assistant state's attorney, prosecuting felony cases

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1986

**Notable:** Ramos ran unsuccessfully for the Illinois Appellate Court in 2020. Her campaign chair was former Circuit Judge Gloria Chevere, who was reassigned from the criminal division in 2014 for jailing people for contempt of court for wearing their pants too low. Ramos also unsuccessfully challenged Timothy Evans for chief judge in 2016. Earlier this year, an appellate court panel took the rare step of reversing a decision by Ramos and reassigning the case to a different judge. The case involves Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, who sued a former employee and his wife for defamation in 2018 over emails they allegedly sent anonymously to media

organizations claiming Dart had had an extra-marital affair and had physically attacked his wife. Ramos threw out the case against the employee's wife, saying that because her husband had admitted to sending the emails, she was no longer liable. The appellate court disagreed and said Ramos should have allowed the case to proceed. They did not explain why they reassigned the case — and one of the appellate panel's judges said she did not think doing so was necessary. In a statement, Ramos said she couldn't comment on the case because it is still pending.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all. The Illinois State Bar Association said attorneys speak highly of her, noting that "she does the right research when needed, is patient, and diligent."

**Daniel Patrick Duffy** **Judge since:** 2014

**Judicial experience:** Duffy was appointed to the bench in 2014 and elected in 2016. He currently serves in the law division, hearing tax and workers' compensation appeals.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice at several small firms doing general civil litigation (1993-2014)
- Member of the Attorney Registration & Disciplinary Commission Review Board, which reviews complaints of attorney misconduct (2004-2013)

**Law school:** University of Notre Dame, 1993

**Notable:** Duffy is married to Sheila O'Grady, a former chief of staff to Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley. In 2016, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit found that Duffy had filed a "clearly frivolous" appeal to avoid paying back a \$300,000 loan he personally guaranteed for a failed kitchenware business. The appeals court determined that the lawsuit was so frivolous that monetary sanctions against Duffy and his business partners were appropriate. It was the second time Duffy was sued over a business loan he had failed to pay back. In 2009, Duffy and then-business partner Victor Reyes, a longtime Daley aide and Chicago powerbroker, were sued by Bank of America for failing to pay back a business loan they had guaranteed. The case ended in a settlement in 2012, the Chicago Sun-Times reported. In a statement, Duffy said, "I hope my last eight years on the bench have provided a sufficient track record by which voters can evaluate me on my own merits for retention."

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said, "Attorneys reported that he is diligent, fair, even-keeled, and sensitive to diversity." The Chicago Council of Lawyers noted that he "appears to have improved his judicial temperament substantially" since his last evaluation in 2016.

**Anna Maria Loftus****Judge since:** 2014

**Judicial experience:** Loftus was appointed to the circuit court in 2014 and elected in 2016. She currently serves in the general chancery section of the chancery division. Previously, she heard mortgage foreclosure cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Partner at a midsize law firm focused on medical malpractice cases and appellate work (2003-2014)
- Associate at an insurance law firm focused on employment cases (2000-2003)
- Law clerk for Illinois Appellate Judge Michael J. Gallagher (1998-2000)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1998

**Notable:** Earlier this year, an appellate court panel reversed Loftus' decision in the case of former Chicago police officer Anthony Abbate, who was convicted of aggravated battery for physically assaulting a bartender in 2007 and was fired from the department. The police pension board denied Abbate's application for annuity benefits, but Loftus overturned that decision, saying the assault was not related to his job. The appellate court reversed her decision, agreeing with the board that Abbate's actions on the night of the assault and attempted cover-up were related to his employment as a police officer. Loftus declined to comment on the decision.

**Community involvement:**

- Mentor, Adoption Center of Illinois, a local adoption agency
- Volunteer, Friendship Center Food Pantry (2013-2018)

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all. The Illinois State Bar Association said, "Attorneys praised her thoroughness, thoughtful opinions, fairness, high integrity, and temperament."

**Aleksandra "Alex" Gillespie** **Judge since:** 2014

**Judicial experience:** Gillespie was appointed to the circuit court by the Illinois Supreme

Court in 2014. She won election in 2016. She currently serves in the Skokie courthouse, hearing criminal and traffic cases. She also has presided over the Cook County Drug Court Treatment Program since 2017.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant state's attorney (1994-2014)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1993

**Notable:** Gillespie sentenced a man to two years' probation and 200 hours of community service after he was convicted of a felony hate crime for a racist rant against a Puerto Rican woman in a Cook County forest preserve in 2018 that was captured on a viral video.

**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Total Link2 Community, a Northbrook-based nonprofit for young adults with disabilities, since 2002

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. Attorneys interviewed by the Illinois State Bar Association "overwhelmingly reported that she has a good command of the law and knows how to apply it. She is described as being professional, fair, efficient, and even-tempered." The Chicago Council of Lawyers notes that she is "very invested in the drug court that she runs in the second (municipal) district."

**Eve Marie Reilly** **Judge since:** 2014

**Judicial experience:** Reilly was appointed to the circuit court in 2014 and elected in 2016. She currently serves in the chancery division.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant state's attorney (1997-2014)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1997**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Misericordia Heart of Mercy, a nonprofit dedicated to providing housing and services to people with developmental and intellectual disabilities

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said she "is praised for being prepared and for being willing to do her own research to understand all issues." The Illinois State Bar Association said, "While most attorneys praised her temperament, a few found her to be impatient at times."



**Freddrenna M. Lyle** **Judge since:** 2011

**Judicial experience:** Lyle was appointed to the circuit court in 2011 and elected the following year. She is currently the supervising judge of the court's surety section, which deals with companies that guarantee bonds in civil lawsuits. She also hears cases in the probate division. Previously, she heard mortgage foreclosure cases and elder law matters.

**Previous experience:**

- 6th Ward alderperson in the Chicago City Council (1998-2011)
- Attorney in private practice at several small firms focused on a variety of cases, including criminal defense, election law, business disputes, domestic relations, and municipal finance (1980-1998)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1980

**Notable:** Lyle served as alderperson of the 6th Ward, covering parts of the Englewood, Chatham, and Greater Grand Crossing neighborhoods on Chicago's South Side for 13 years. In 2011, she lost a tight race for re-election to Roderick Sawyer. In a 2015 interview, she said being alderperson sometimes felt like "being on a treadmill — no matter how fast you run you're going nowhere" because as the needs of her community increased, the resources being provided to the community decreased.

**Community involvement:**

- Member, South Side NAACP
- Member, Rainbow PUSH

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated her well qualified and said she is "praised for her knowledge of the law and for her courtroom management." The council said in foreclosure cases, she is praised as "one of the judges who doesn't automatically assume the bank is right."

**Jerry A. Esrig** **Judge since:** 2013

**Judicial experience:** Esrig was first appointed to the circuit court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2013. In 2014, he lost a bid for election and was subsequently re-appointed by the Supreme Court before being elected in the 9th subcircuit in 2016. Esrig currently serves in the law division, hearing lawsuits for large



monetary damages. He previously heard jury trials for smaller amounts at the Richard J. Daley Center.

**Previous experience:**

- Partner at small private firms, handling personal injury and commercial litigation (1978-2013)

**Law school:** University of Chicago, 1978

**Notable:** Esrig is married to Judge Deborah Thorne, a bankruptcy judge in the Northern District of Illinois. Last year, in a case that had stretched on for years, Esrig ruled mostly in favor of Lyons Township High School District 204 after it was sued by the Township's Trustees of Schools for unpaid fees and expenses in its bid to separate finances from the trustees' office. The trustees said the school district owed more than \$4 million, but Esrig ordered them to pay just over \$750,000.

**Community involvement:**

- Mentor at Evanston Youth and Opportunity United as part of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated him well qualified. The Illinois State Bar Association said lawyers "described him as being very smart and intelligent, with excellent legal knowledge and ability, and as being professional, impartial, and patient."

**Alison C. Conlon****Judge since:** 2015**Judicial experience:**

Conlon was appointed to the circuit court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2015. She won election the following year. She currently serves in the chancery division.

**Previous experience:**

- Worked at two mid-sized law firms focused on commercial disputes and representing municipalities in civil cases.
- Worked for less than two years in the Chicago Law Department, handling policy and commercial cases.
- Clerked for U.S. District Judge Charles P. Kocoras.

**Law school:** Duke University, 2000

**Notable:** In 2020, Conlon ordered the city of Chicago to turn over four decades of police misconduct files in response to a years-old Freedom of Information Act lawsuit. The city appealed her decision, and the appellate court overturned it last year, saying that at the time the FOIA request was denied the

city was under a separate court injunction that prohibited it from releasing the records. In September, the Illinois Supreme Court agreed with the appellate court, saying that FOIA requests should be evaluated by courts based on the circumstances at the time of the request, and overturned Conlon's decision.

**Community involvement:**

- Former board member, Debate It Forward, a nonprofit that teaches debate skills to kids
- Former advisory board member, Catholic Charities of Chicago

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers describes her as "well prepared and thoughtful" with a "calming influence in the courtroom."

**Rossana P. Fernandez** **Judge since:** 2015**Judicial experience:**

Fernandez was appointed to the bench in 2015 and elected the following year. She currently hears domestic relations cases in Rolling Meadows. Previously she was assigned to the domestic violence division.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in a number of small firms and eventually her own practice, focused on civil lawsuits, personal injury cases, and immigration (1997-2015)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 1996

**Notable:** Several attorneys told Injustice Watch that Fernandez is often unnecessarily harsh on litigants and lawyers and makes unusual and unreasonable procedural demands. These temperament issues were reported during her time in the domestic violence division and since she has moved to domestic relations. Attorneys noted that while she is knowledgeable about the law, her lack of flexibility is especially stark when cases involve victims of domestic abuse, pro se litigants, and other marginalized individuals. But other attorneys noted that she is committed to making sure everyone plays by the same rules and was "relentless" in pushing for increased legal resources and expedited case processing at the domestic violence courthouse and for a legal help desk to be created for pro se litigants in Rolling Meadows.

In a statement, Fernandez said she has worked with legal aid organizations to help people navigate the often-confusing court

process. "I am keenly aware how judicial rulings affect families profoundly." In her current assignment, she said, "I ensure that the code of civil procedure is adhered to, particularly with issues of 'notice' so that no one loses their home, their children, or their liberty without due process and that all parties work together with an eye on equitable division of assets."

**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer with Chicago Cares, a nonprofit that connects volunteers with service projects
- Member, expungement committee, Fiesta del Sol, a four-day Latino festival in Pilsen

**Bar association ratings:** Four bar associations found her not recommended for retention. The Illinois State Bar Association said, "While attorneys agreed that she knows the law, writes well-thought-out opinions and is hardworking, substantial concerns were raised about her judicial temperament and demeanor." The Chicago Council of Lawyers recommended her for retention but noted that "reports of problems with Judge Fernandez's handling of her call are credible and concerning."

**William B. Sullivan****Judge since:** 2015**Judicial experience:**

Sullivan was appointed as a judge in 2015 and elected the following year. He currently hears mortgage foreclosure cases in the chancery division.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice specializing in real estate and business transactions (1993-2015)
- Worked as a real estate broker (1998-2015)

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1992

**Notable:** In 2018, Sullivan created a judicial exchange program between Lebanese judges and the Cook County judiciary.

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, Oak Park Area Arts Council (2019-2022)

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said attorneys praised him for his "broad legal knowledge and ability" and said some specifically cited his "exceptional patience with pro se litigants."

**John Fitzgerald Lyke, Jr.****Judge since:** 2015

**Judicial experience:** Lyke was appointed to the circuit court in 2015 and elected the following year. He currently serves in the criminal division hearing felony cases. He previously served in felony bond court.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on criminal defense, civil rights and personal injury cases (2000-2015)
- Administrative hearing officer for the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, where he adjudicated violations of Chicago municipal codes (2006-2011)
- Cook County assistant state's attorney, prosecuting felony, homicide, and juvenile cases (1994-2000)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 1994

**Notable:** In 2017, the Cook County Assessor's Office placed a lien on a Calumet Park property owned by Lyke and his wife, Denise, saying they owed more than \$6,000 in back taxes for four years in which they erroneously claimed that it was their primary residence and received tax breaks for it. Records show the Lykes have claimed a homeowner exemption in recent years on a different house in Matteson that they bought in 2007. Lyke said he wasn't aware of the lien until Injustice Watch brought it to his attention, and he has since paid the taxes.

As a defense attorney in 2012, Lyke represented Tarance Etheredge, a man who was charged with aggravated assault of a police officer in an incident in which officers shot him in the back, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. He ultimately pleaded guilty to a gun-possession charge. In 2020, Etheredge accepted a \$10 million settlement from the city (Lyke was not involved in the civil lawsuit).

In 2017, Lyke's son was shot while attending a funeral for a friend. In an interview with the Chicago Tribune after the shooting, Lyke said he was praying for both his son's recovery and for the shooter. "The shooter, I want him to understand that I love him — I'm just disappointed and upset with him — because we're all God's children," Lyke said.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said, "Some advocates questioned his application of the law when he was assigned to central bond court, but as a

judge in the criminal division, he is reported to be well prepared, fair to all parties, and does well in managing his courtroom."

**Carrie E. Hamilton****Judge since:** 2015**Judicial experience:**

Hamilton was appointed to the circuit court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2015. She won election in 2016. She currently serves in the Markham courthouse, hearing civil cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Assistant U.S. attorney, Northern District of Illinois (2001-2015)
- Worked in two Chicago-based law firms as an associate focused on commercial litigation (1996-2001)
- Adjunct professor at Northwestern University School of Law, teaching seminars on human trafficking and trial advocacy

**Law school:** Northwestern University, 1996

**Notable:** During her time as a federal prosecutor, Hamilton served as deputy chief of the public corruption section and was one of the lead prosecutors in the corruption trial of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich. Other notable cases include the prosecution of former U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, the fraud and attempted bribery case against political fundraiser Antoin "Tony" Rezko, a corruption case involving Chicago's red light camera contracts, and the prosecution of members of the terrorist organization Hamas.

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, Heartland Alliance Human Care Services, which focuses on providing holistic services to end poverty through jobs, justice, housing and health care
- Advisory council member, Reclaim13, an organization that provides holistic services to survivors of human trafficking
- Past board member, James B. Moran Center for Juvenile Advocacy, which provides free legal and social services to underprivileged youth in Evanston

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers praised her "for her courtroom management and for her temperament."

**Patricia "Pat" Spratt****Judge since:** 2015

**Judicial experience:** Spratt was appointed to the circuit court in 2015 and elected the following year. She currently hears mortgage foreclosure cases in the chancery division. One day a week, she presides over the North Lawndale Restorative Justice Community Court.

**Previous experience:**

- Associate and partner at two mid-sized law firms practicing civil litigation (1992-2015)
- Adjunct law professor, Loyola University Chicago (2001-2008)
- Law clerk, Judge William J. Bauer, U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit (1991-1992)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1991

**Notable:** Spratt is married to William J. Bauer, a former chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit. She had previously been his secretary and, after graduating law school, was his law clerk. Bauer was appointed to the federal district court by President Richard Nixon and had previously served as the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. Although Spratt ran for judge as a Democrat, several other Republican-appointed former U.S. attorneys were top donors to her campaigns for judge, including Dan K. Webb, Anton Valukas, Samuel Skinner, and former Illinois Gov. Jim Thompson, all of whom worked in the U.S. Attorney's Office under Bauer.

In 2018, the Illinois Appellate Court found that Spratt had committed "plain error" in a case involving tenants who had sued their former landlord. At trial, after the tenants had presented their case, they filed a motion for a directed verdict, asking Spratt to rule in their favor before the defense presented its case, which she did. The appeals court said that under Illinois rules only defendants can make those types of motions. The appeals court noted that a finding of plain error by an appellate court in a civil case should be "exceedingly rare" but that this case qualified. Spratt declined to comment.

Spratt was assigned to the North Lawndale Restorative Justice Community Court in 2019. The court provides an opportunity for young adults accused of nonviolent crimes to have the charges against them dropped after participating in a restorative justice process and committing to a repair of harm agreement. Spratt told Block Club Chicago the court was "a place I've wanted to be ever since I got on the bench."

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, BUILD Chicago, a nonprofit violence prevention and mentorship organization
- Volunteer and development board director, PAWS Chicago, a no-kill animal shelter

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said, "She understands and implements the concepts of restorative justice" in her assignment to the North Lawndale Restorative Justice Community Court. The Illinois State Bar Association said lawyers "praised her legal knowledge and ability, thoroughness, sensitivity, temperament, and integrity."

**James L. Allegretti****Judge since:** 2016

**Judicial experience:** Allegretti was elected judge in 2016. He currently serves in the Skokie courthouse, hearing eviction and small claims cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice, focused on personal injury, workers' compensation, DUI and traffic cases (1989-2016)
- Fourth Ward alderman in Park Ridge (2005-2011)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1978

**Notable:** Allegretti ran for judge as a Republican and was elected from the 12th subcircuit. Attorneys who spoke to Injustice Watch raised concerns about Allegretti's courtroom demeanor, saying he was especially harsh to people without attorneys and had a pro-landlord bias in eviction cases. During one court hearing in September, an Injustice Watch reporter observed Allegretti mute an unrepresented tenant repeatedly before kicking them off of a Zoom hearing. On the same day, Allegretti lectured a different pro se tenant who had failed to comply with an earlier order. "The orders of the court must be complied with. If the orders aren't complied with, then they have no teeth. Then we would be like the police: They can't shoot you, they can't chase you, they can just say, 'Thank you, sir, can I have another?'" Allegretti, through a spokesperson, could not be reached for comment.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said some attorneys noted that Allegretti "can be demeaning with tenants in eviction proceedings," but most lawyers said he is "even-keeled and respectful."



**Eulalia “Evie” De La Rosa** **Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:** De La Rosa was elected judge in 2016. She currently serves in the Maywood courthouse hearing criminal cases.**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant public defender (2005-2016)
- Court coordinator, Cook County Circuit Court Child Protection Division (2004-2005)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 2003**Notable:** De La Rosa joined a class-action lawsuit of female assistant public defenders and law clerks who worked for the Cook County Public Defender’s Office between 2015 and 2019. The plaintiffs alleged that they suffered a hostile work environment caused by persistent sexual misconduct of male detainees in the Cook County Jail and that the office’s higher-ups didn’t do enough to stop the behavior. The county board approved a \$14 million settlement in the case in 2020.**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said she is reported to have good temperament and is “both punctual and diligent on the bench.”**Carolyn J. Gallagher****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Gallagher was elected as a circuit judge in 2016. She is currently assigned to the probate division, hearing decedent estate cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Worked at two private firms and then opened her own solo practice focused on commercial litigation (1982-2000, 2004-2016)
- Taught legal research and writing at

DePaul University College of Law (2000-2004)

- Law clerk, Illinois Appellate Judge Helen F. McGillicuddy (1982-1985)

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1981**Notable:** Gallagher unsuccessfully ran for an appellate court seat in 2020. In the run-up to that election, she got into a public dispute with her former circuit court campaign consultant, Mary Kay Dawson. In 2019, Gallagher sent a three-page letter to judges and Cook County Democratic Party leaders accusing Dawson of misrepresenting her relationship with the party and slandering her. Dawson denied Gallagher’s claims, and the judge was criticized by some for airing these grievances. Gallagher declined to comment.**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Harry Chapin Food Bank
- Former board secretary and volunteer general counsel, New Health Foundation Worldwide, a nonprofit focused on affirming health care for transgender and gender nonconforming people

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers commended her courtroom management skills. “She is reported generally to be respectful to the parties before her, and she is praised for her temperament.”**Maureen O’Donoghue Hannon****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Hannon was elected to the circuit court in 2016. She currently serves in the county division hearing real estate taxation, adoption, mental health commitment, election, and other cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Cook County assistant state’s attorney, representing the county and individual officials in various civil lawsuits, including six years as a supervisor in the division of the office that handles cases with multiple county agencies (1991-1995, 1998-2016)

- Associate attorney at a boutique law firm representing both plaintiffs and defendants in employment, commercial, and other civil lawsuits (1995-1998)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1991**Notable:** In her role at the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, Hannon represented the Cook County sheriff’s merit board in a case filed by a former sheriff’s deputy who claimed that his firing should be voided because Sheriff Tom Dart had improperly appointed some of the board’s members. The appellate court ultimately ruled in the deputy’s favor, leading to other lawsuits and several fired sheriff’s employees getting reinstated with back pay.**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association noted that “attorneys uniformly praised her legal knowledge and command of the law, fairness, professionalism, and temperament.”**D. Renee Jackson****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:** Jackson was elected judge in 2016. She currently serves in the domestic relations division.**Previous experience:**

- Worked in private practice focusing on commercial litigation (2006-2008, 2010-2016)
- Staff attorney, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, primarily dealing with land use and real estate (2008-2010)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 2005**Community involvement:**

- Mentor, Rainbow PUSH Oratorical Society

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said attorneys and colleagues said, “she is a hard worker who understands the legal issues well and treats all with respect, though sometimes her

conferences tend to run long due to allowing both parties a lot of time in an effort to be fair and make sure both sides are heard.”

**Daryl Jones** **Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Jones was elected to the circuit court in 2016. He has primarily served in the juvenile justice division.

**Previous experience:**

- Member of the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, which makes parole decisions and sets conditions for people being released from prison (2015-2016)
- Chief of intergovernmental affairs and senior legal adviser at the Illinois Department of Corrections (2012-2015)
- Cook County assistant state’s attorney (2005-2012)

**Law school:** Southern Illinois University, 2005**Notable:** Jones is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran. When running for judge in 2016, he said he had always aspired to be a juvenile court judge because of his experience growing up in a neighborhood with gangs and other social issues. Jones ran unsuccessfully for 37th Ward alderperson in 2007. One of his opponents was a former alderperson who had resigned after being convicted on corruption charges in the 1990s. When asked about it, Jones told the Los Angeles Times, “There are a lot of people who either have served time in prison or have a family member who’s been convicted of a crime. How can you criticize a candidate for going to prison, if you’ll alienate the voters at the same time?”**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he is “reportedly impartial on the bench and treats everyone with respect” but noted that “some respondents say he can be slow to rule,” while others said, “He takes the time necessary to come to the right conclusion.”**MORE ONLINE****Check out our digital judicial election guide**To read more information about each candidate, scan the QR code or visit [injusticewatch.org/judges](https://injusticewatch.org/judges).

**Steven A. Kozicki****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Kozicki was elected judge in 2016. He currently serves in the Rolling Meadows courthouse hearing misdemeanor cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice handling criminal and civil cases (1998-2016)
- Trial attorney at a small firm focused on defending municipalities in civil lawsuits, including defending police officers in civil rights cases (1989-1998)
- DuPage County public defender (1986-1989)
- DuPage County assistant state's attorney (1985-1986)

**Law school:** Loyola University of Chicago, 1985

**Notable:** In 2019, Kozicki personally vouched for then-associate judge Richard Schwind, who had reportedly told a Black defendant who was on trial for hitting a man who had used a racial slur against him, "You were never a slave." Kozicki sent a letter to his fellow circuit judges urging them to vote to retain Schwind for another four-year term, Injustice Watch reported. "I urge you to trust my 33 years of direct evidence of Judge Schwind's qualifications to remain an associate judge of Cook County," Kozicki wrote. The circuit judges ultimately voted not to retain Schwind. In a statement to Injustice Watch, Kozicki said that he "in no way condoned Judge Schwind's inappropriate and insensitive comment in open court." But he felt that the comment was isolated and not representative of Schwind's time on the bench. "I felt that this single comment, during a career of more than 30 years, should not cost him his career."

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said he "gives clear rulings, is sensitive to all, and has high integrity."

**Matthew Link****Judge since:** 2016

**Judicial experience:** Link was elected judge in 2016. He currently serves in the domestic relations division, hearing divorce, child support, and custody cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Legal counsel and policy director, Chicago

City Council finance committee (2007-2016)

- Associate at a small law firm focussed on civil litigation defense (2005-2007)

**Law school:** DePaul University, 2004

**Notable:** Link ran unopposed for a 14th subcircuit vacancy in the 2016 election, winning despite having no campaign website or fundraising committee and not participating in the bar association evaluation process. He had spent most of his career working for the Chicago City Council finance committee under longtime Ald. Ed Burke.

**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Special Olympics

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he has good legal ability and is regarded for "his sensitivity to cultural differences among the litigants who appear before him."

**Mary Kathleen McHugh****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

McHugh was elected to the circuit court in 2016. She currently serves in the Bridgeview courthouse, hearing civil jury cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Partner in a small law firm working on personal injury defense and insurance cases (1993-2016)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1993

**Notable:** McHugh was a passenger in a car driven by Associate Judge Mohammed Ghouse, when he crashed it into a parked car in Hinsdale in 2019. McHugh refused to speak to police investigators, according to records obtained by WBEZ. The car Ghouse was driving was registered to McHugh, WBEZ reported. Ghouse eventually pleaded guilty to driving under the influence and was assigned to administrative duties. In a statement to Injustice Watch, McHugh said she was being treated for a head injury and did not refuse to cooperate with police.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said she "presides over high volume calls and is reported to be organized and fair to all litigants."

**Leonard Murray****Judge since:** 2007**Judicial experience:**

Murray was selected as an associate judge in 2007 and elected as a circuit judge in 2016. He is currently the acting supervising judge in the housing section of the first municipal district, hearing cases involving municipal code violations.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on tax law and litigation (1974-2007)

**Law school:** Northwestern University (1974)

**Notable:** Murray is a U.S. Army veteran. The Illinois Supreme Court suspended Murray's law license in 1999 over his neglect of seven clients over a seven-year period. His initial suspension was for 15 months, but after three months the remaining suspension was stayed and he was permitted to return to practice on probation. The Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission found that for at least two of the seven clients, Murray was dealing with the murder of his sister. Murray could not be reached for comment.

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, Africa International House USA, an African arts and culture organization

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by most bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said he "has good legal knowledge in his current assignment." LAGBAC, the LGBTQ+ Bar Association, rated Murray not recommended for retention.

**Brendan A. O'Brien****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

O'Brien was elected to the circuit court in 2016. He currently presides over jury trials in the law division.

**Previous experience:**

- Partner at a large national law firm, focused on defense against medical malpractice and construction injury cases (1999-2016)
- Associate at two firms specializing in railroad defense and motor vehicle injury cases (1996-1999)
- Appropriations and research analyst for Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan (1991-1992)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1996

**Notable:** Several members of O'Brien's family have served in the judiciary. Both his father and grandfather were judges. O'Brien's wife, Jessica A. O'Brien, was also a judge until she resigned in 2018, after a jury found her guilty of mortgage fraud for lying to lenders in a \$1.4 million scheme in which she pocketed \$325,000. In a statement, a spokesperson for O'Brien noted that he was not accused or involved in this matter.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he is a "well-respected jurist who is exceptionally knowledgeable" and is "praised for his temperament."

**Kevin M. O'Donnell****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

O'Donnell was elected judge in 2016. He currently serves in the Rolling Meadows courthouse hearing civil, parentage, misdemeanor, and traffic cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on estate planning, real estate, corporate transactions, and business disputes (1992-2016)

**Law school:** DePaul University, 1988

**Notable:** O'Donnell was found not qualified or recommended by the majority of bar associations in 2016. The Illinois State Bar Association said there were concerns about "his limited trial experience and lack of recent complex litigation."

**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS), an overnight emergency homeless shelter

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said he is regarded as having "thoughtful and well-reasoned opinions," as well as having "good legal ability."



**Susana L. Ortiz****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Ortiz was elected judge in 2016. She currently serves in the pretrial division, hearing initial proceedings in criminal cases. Ortiz previously heard domestic violence and felony cases in the Markham courthouse.

**Previous experience:**

- Staff attorney, IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, specializing in criminal defense litigation and supervision of law students in the school's criminal defense legal clinic (2003-2016)
- Worked at a small criminal defense and DUI firm (2001-2002)

**Law school:** IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 2000

**Notable:** In 2019, Ortiz set a \$300,000 bond for a man arrested after a shooting at a house party in Englewood that injured 13 people, despite the fact that prosecutors did not present any evidence that the defendant was responsible for the shooting. Advocates for bail reform criticized the decision, saying it violated Chief Judge Timothy Evans' 2017 order directing judges to set bond in amounts that people could afford to pay. Ortiz declined to comment on her decision. In 2008, Ortiz and students from IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law successfully petitioned to overturn the conviction of Herbert Whitlock, a man wrongfully convicted of murder.

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said Ortiz was "especially praised for her impartiality and temperament in her previous assignment presiding over domestic violence cases."

**Jesse Outlaw****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Outlaw was elected as a circuit judge in 2016. He is currently assigned to the probate division, hearing adult guardianship cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Associate at a small law firm focused on real estate and municipal law (2012-2015)
- Attorney in private practice specializing in bankruptcy, divorce, and other civil cases (1981-2015)

- Court-appointed representative for adults with disabilities

**Law school:** Texas Southern University, 1977

**Community involvement:**

- Volunteer, Branch Family Institute, a nonprofit that provides culturally relevant counseling services to families affected by poverty and racism (2017-2018)

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said, "Attorneys highly respect him for his expertise in guardianship law and for his professionalism and fairness."

**Patrick Joseph Powers****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Powers was elected judge in 2016. He currently serves in the domestic relations division.

**Previous experience:**

- Attorney in private practice focused on family law, divorce, estate planning, and residential real estate (1988-2016)

**Law school:** John Marshall Law School, 1987

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said, "Attorneys praised his legal knowledge and ability, his sensitivity, and efficiency in running his courtroom, especially during the transition to Zoom hearings."

**Marguerite Ann Quinn****Judge since:** 2007**Judicial experience:**

Quinn was selected as an associate judge in 2007, after running unsuccessfully for the circuit court in 2006. She was elected as a circuit judge in 2016. She currently serves in the law division trial section. She previously served in the criminal division and the Skokie courthouse.

**Previous experience:**

- Worked in private practice, focusing on real estate taxation (1999-2007)
- Cook County assistant state's attorney (1986-1998)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1985

**Notable:** In Skokie, Quinn presided over specialty courts, which are designed to offer treatment and alternatives to incarceration

for veterans, people charged with misdemeanors, and people struggling with mental illness. She presided earlier this year over the first trial against Sterigenics, a medical-device sterilization company that has been sued by over 700 people for health complications that allegedly arose from the company's now-closed Willowbrook facility. That trial ended in September with a \$363 million jury verdict for the plaintiff, Sue Kamada. Quinn ran unsuccessfully for the Illinois Appellate Court in 2012.

**Community involvement:**

- Board member, Lawrence Hall Family Youth Services, a nonprofit dedicated to providing trauma-informed education and housing to address childhood trauma
- Board member, Mobile Care Chicago, a no-cost asthma and dental care nonprofit partnering with underserved elementary schools in Chicago
- Former mentor for the Schuler Scholars program for first-generation college students

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Chicago Council of Lawyers said she is praised for her rapport with juries and is "impartial and respectful to those who appear before her."

**Catherine Ann Schneider****Judge since:** 2016**Judicial experience:**

Schneider was elected to the circuit court in 2016. She currently serves in the law division, hearing pretrial motions for civil lawsuits. She previously served in the first municipal district, hearing civil cases.

**Previous experience:**

- Supervising attorney at CARPLS, a legal aid organization (2008-2016)
- Attorney in private practice focused on commercial debt collection and real estate cases (2006-2008)
- Worked in Career Services at Loyola University Chicago School of Law (2004-2006)
- Legal counsel and vice president of a mortgage company (2002-2004)

**Law school:** Loyola University Chicago, 1994

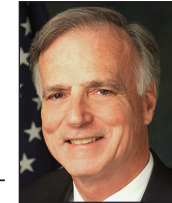
**Bar association ratings:** Recommended for retention by all bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association said, "Attorneys praised her legal ability and her commitment to eliminating bias."

The 13th subcircuit in the far northwest suburbs covers Palatine, Schaumburg, Barrington, and Hanover townships, and parts of Arlington Heights and Buffalo Grove.

**Gary William Seyring (Republican)****Experience:**

Law Offices of Gary W. Seyring

- Attorney in private practice (2010-present): Focused on real estate, contract disputes, domestic relations, contested estates, and personal injury cases.



Seyring, Watson & Galvin

- Attorney in private practice (2000-2010) Flynn, Murphy, Ryan & Seyring
- Attorney in private practice (1978-2000)

**Notable:** Seyring is running for judge in the 13th subcircuit for the fifth time. He lost in the Republican primary in 2014 and 2016, and lost in the general election in 2018 and 2020. In addition to his law practice, he also has served as an arbitrator with the Cook County Arbitration Program. Before becoming a lawyer, Seyring was an accountant for several years.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

**Joe Gump (Democratic)****Experience:**

Law Offices of Joseph M. Gump

- Attorney in private practice (2020-present): Focused on real estate transactions and misdemeanor criminal cases.



Cook County Public Defender's Office

- Assistant public defender (1989-2020): Started in the appeals division. Spent 17 years representing defendants in felony cases at the Rolling Meadows courthouse.

**Notable:** Gump ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2020. His parents served time in federal prison in the 1980s for participating in nonviolent, nuclear disarmament protests on federal property, which Gump has said inspired his career in public defense.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

**Endorsements:** IVI-IPO, Personal PAC



# InjusticeWatch



Injustice Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization in Chicago. Our work focuses on justice and equity in the court system. This judicial election guide is the result of a year of extensive research and reporting about Cook County judicial candidates. We offer the guide as a resource to voters. We don't make endorsements or recommendations.

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