



Chicago Council
OF LAWYERS
Chicago's public interest bar association

The Chicago Council of Lawyers Evaluation Report: Judges on the Ballot in the November 3, 2026 General Election

September 25, 2026

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The Chicago Council of Lawyers (“Council”), in this report, releases its evaluation of the judges seeking retention in the November 3, 2026 general election. We also include our evaluations of the candidates who won their primary election held on March 17, 2026 and who are on the November ballot.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR RETENTION CANDIDATES

The criteria for the Council’s evaluations are whether the retention candidate has demonstrated the ability to serve on the relevant court in the following categories:

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

If a candidate has demonstrated the ability to perform the work required of a judge in all of these areas, the Council assigns a rating of **Qualified**. If a candidate has demonstrated excellence in most of these areas, the Council assigns a rating of **Well Qualified**. If a candidate has demonstrated excellence in all of these areas, the Council assigns a rating of **Highly Qualified**. If a candidate has not demonstrated that they meet all of the criteria evaluated by the Council, the Council assigns a rating of Not Qualified.

As part of the evaluation process, we require candidates to provide detailed information about their backgrounds, including any complaints filed against them with the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (“ARDC”) or the Judicial Inquiry Board (“JIB”).

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

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

The Council's evaluation process includes:

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

The Council places special importance on interviews with attorneys who practice before the judge, particularly those who were not referred to the Council by the candidate, and when available, interviews with litigants who have had cases in front of said judge. Most evaluations are based on information gathered and interviews held during the few months just prior to the general election.

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

Judicial Candidates on the Ballot in Cook County

Appellate Court

Judith C. Rice – Qualified

Hon. Judith Rice was admitted to practice law in 1988. She was elected to the bench in 2014 and served in both First Municipal and Domestic Relations. Since 2021, she has served as Presiding Judge of the Domestic Violence Division. Judge Rice is considered to be very smart and has extensive experience as a government official and in the banking sector. She is reported to have a very good temperament and a high degree of professionalism. She is praised as an excellent administrator and dedicated public servant. The Council finds her Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Circuit Court

Steven Q. McKenzie – Qualified

Steven Quaintance McKenzie was admitted to practice in 1997. He has worked as an Assistant Corporation Counsel in the Chicago Department of Law for most of his career, and currently serves in a supervisory position in the Housing Division. Mr. McKenzie is considered to have good legal ability and temperament. He has litigation experience and is well respected for his work. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Luz Maria Toledo – Qualified

Hon. Luz Maria Toledo was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2006. She worked with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office from 2007-2026. She was most recently assigned to the Civil Actions Bureau, Real Estate Litigation Practice, where she handled real estate tax matters. Prior to that, she spent over 10 years in the Criminal Division, where she prosecuted traffic, misdemeanor, and felony cases.

Judge Toledo received high marks from all who were interviewed. She has a vast amount of trial experience in both criminal and civil matters, and is considered to have good legal ability and knowledge. She is reported to have outstanding character, to treat everyone fairly and impartially, and to have a good disposition. She was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Ashonta C. Rice – Qualified

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

Judge Rice is considered to have good legal ability with substantial litigation experience. She is reported to have a good temperament with a variety of litigation experiences. She was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Ava George Stewart – Qualified

Hon. Ava George Stewart was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1994. Evaluators praise her extensive courtroom experience, legal knowledge, and the respect she has earned among judges and prosecutors. She was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds Judge Stewart Qualified for the Circuit Court.

D'Anthony ("Tony") Thedford – Qualified

Hon. D'Anthony "Tony" Thedford was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1997. He served as a Cook County Assistant Public Defender for eight years before practicing criminal defense and civil rights law for over a decade. In December 2024, he was appointed as a Circuit Court Judge by the Illinois Supreme Court. The Council finds D'Anthony "Tony" Thedford Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Radiane Ward (1st Subcircuit) – Well Qualified

Hon. Radiane Ward was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2008. She was most recently an assistant public defender and adjunct professor of law. Previously, she has worked in the Office of the Chief Judge and in legal aid. Judge Ward has an excellent reputation for diligence, impeccable integrity, and grasp of the rules of evidence. She is considered attentive to issues of bias and a strong but fair advocate. She is considered calm, professional, and capable. Judge Ward was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds her Well Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Ashley Greer Shambley (1st Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Ashley Greer Shambley was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2010. She most recently served as a Cook County Public Defender and, before that, was in private practice. Judge Shambley has a good reputation with regard to her legal ability and knowledge. She was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

John Carroll (3rd Subcircuit) – Qualified

The Illinois Supreme Court appointed John P. Carroll Jr. to the Third Subcircuit of the Circuit Court of Cook County (effective May 23, 2025–December 7, 2026). Licensed in Illinois since 1999, he previously served six years as Deputy Chief of Staff in the Illinois Attorney General's Office and 19 years as an Assistant State's Attorney with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. He brings extensive prosecutorial and leadership experience and is found Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Rachel Marrello (3rd Subcircuit) – Qualified

Rachel Marrello was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2000. The Council finds Rachel Marrello Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Stephanie S. Kelly (5th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Stephanie Kelly was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2001. She has been in both private practice and in-house in the field of labor and employment law. Judge Kelly's career has included extensive experience in handling administrative hearings similar to litigation in other courts and experience supervising litigation in various courts. She is described as diligent and professional. While her courtroom experience is from earlier in her career, we believe she is qualified for the bench. She was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds Judge Kelly Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Kathleen Cunniff Ori (8th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Kathleen Ori was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2007. Since 2017, she has served as an Assistant State's Attorney in Cook County. Previously, she was in private practice. The Council finds Ms. Ori Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Lester Finkle (8th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Admitted to the Illinois bar in 1982, Hon. Lester W. Finkle was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1982. He served in the Cook County public defender's office until 2021 when he entered private practice. Judge Finkle was appointed to the Circuit Court in 2025. He has long taught appellate advocacy and legal writing as an adjunct professor at University of Illinois Chicago School of Law and Loyola University Chicago School of Law. The Council finds Hon. Finkle Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Jarrett Knox (11th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Jarrett Knox was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2014. He previously worked as an Equal Justice Works Fellow and then with the Cook County Public Defender's Office. Judge Knox is described as smart, knowledgeable, and thorough. He is also praised for his honesty, fairness, and impartiality. He was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds Judge Knox Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Kim Przekota (11th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Kimberly Przekota was admitted to practice in 2008 and was a career Assistant Cook County State's Attorney. Most recently, she was a First Chair prosecutor in the Criminal Division. Judge Przekota is praised for her legal ability and knowledge. She is reported to have a good temperament and trial skills. She has substantial litigation experience in more complex matters. Judge Przekota was appointed to the Circuit Court in February of 2025. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Robert "Bob" Groebner (13th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Robert Groebner receives praise for legal ability, integrity, temperament, and punctuality. He appears to have a strong reputation among the defense bar. Judge Groebner has significant litigation experience and the experience to run a courtroom. He was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds Judge Groebner Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Brittany Michelle Pedersen (13th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Brittany Pedersen was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2009. She began her career in the Kane County Public Defender's office. In 2012, she began working as a solo practitioner in private practice and has focused her practice on criminal defense, family law, civil litigation, real estate and contract disputes.

Ms. Pedersen is described as a passionate and zealous advocate. She was called a skilled attorney and is considered an excellent litigator. She has been described as knowledgeable with a professional demeanor. The Council finds Ms. Pedersen Qualified for the Circuit Court.

William F. Kelley (13th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. William Kelley was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1980. He served in a clerkship with the Louisiana Supreme Court in the Criminal Appeals Division for one year. Since 1982, he has been in private practice. Judge Kelley is considered to have a fine temperament and very good legal knowledge. He has extensive experience supervising cases. He was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds Judge Kelley Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Dan Naranjo (13th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Daniel Naranjo was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2000. Prior to his appointment to the bench, he worked as an Assistant Public Defender III in the Cook County Public Defender's Office for 25 years, and prior to that he worked in private practice for three years.

Judge Naranjo is praised for his legal knowledge and ability, and described as an excellent trial attorney. He is considered sensitive to bias, with good character, and temperament. He was appointed to the Circuit Court in May of 2025. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Julian Sanchez Crozier (16th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Julian Sanchez Crozier was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2013. Evaluators consistently describe him as exceptionally intelligent, deeply knowledgeable, and possessing strong legal judgment and integrity. He is praised for his even temperament, diligence, and commitment to community outreach. Judge Crozier was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Jessica Karina Velez (16th Subcircuit) – Not Qualified

Ms. Velez is considered calm, pleasant, and bright. However, she lacks trial experience and it is difficult to assess her legal ability at this time. She has not demonstrated her abilities sufficiently to be recommended at this time. The Council finds Ms. Velez Not Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Natalia Moore (17th Subcircuit) – Not Recommended

The candidate did not participate in the evaluation process; therefore, the Council finds Natalia Moore Not Recommended for the Circuit Court.

Bianca B. Brown (17th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Bianca B. Brown was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2010. Her diverse career includes service at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, City of Chicago, Illinois Attorney General's Office CTA, and as an ARDC hearing board member. She is praised for her legal knowledge, integrity, and excellent temperament, though some concerns about attention to detail were noted. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Sam Bae (18th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Samuel S. Bae was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1999 and to the Texas bar in 2005. Most recently, he was in private practice; he has been reported to have good legal ability and did a good job representing his clients. The Chicago Council of Lawyers previously found him not qualified, but believes he has since gained sufficient additional experience. He was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Juan Ponce de Leon (18th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Juan Ponce de Leon was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2009. Since 2010, he has been a Public Defender in Cook County. He was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds Judge Ponce de Leon Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Sara McGann (19th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Sara McGann was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2009. She most recently served as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, focusing on appellate law. Judge McGann is described as thoughtful and intelligent. She is consistently composed and professional. She is considered a mentor because of her knowledge, communication skills, and approachability. Judge McGann was appointed to the Circuit Court in July of 2025. The Council finds her Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Monica Somerville (19th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Monica Gail Somerville was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1990. Ms. Somerville is presently a staff attorney with Cabrini Green Legal Aid. She has had a varied career, including service in a

variety of capacities with the City of Chicago, as an Administrative Law Judge with the Illinois Department of Employment Security, a senior attorney with the Cook County Forest Preserve, litigation counsel with the ARDC, and an attorney with the U.S. Postal Service Law Department.

Ms. Somerville is considered to have good legal ability. She is praised for her supervisor skills and for her ability to manage complex government programs. She has litigation experience. She is reported to have a good temperament. The Council finds Ms. Somerville Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Michael J. Zink (20th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Michael Zink was admitted to practice in 2004 and had been in private practice since then. He is considered to have good legal ability and knowledge. Judge Zink is praised for his professionalism and for his work with the community. He is reported to have good litigation skills and has a calm demeanor. He was a well-respected practitioner. Judge Zink was appointed in November of 2024. The Council finds him Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Jon Stromsta (20th Subcircuit) – Qualified

Hon. Jon K. Stromsta was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1985. He was most recently an Administrative Law Judge with the Illinois Department of Employment Security and is a panel arbitrator with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. Previously, he was with the Office of the State Appellate Defender and an attorney for the Central States, Southeast and Southwest Areas Health and Welfare and Pension Funds.

Judge Stromsta is praised for his demeanor and integrity. He is considered to have good legal ability and is widely respected for his knowledge of the law in a variety of areas. He was appointed to the Circuit Court in August of 2026. The Council finds Judge Stromsta Qualified for the Circuit Court.

Judicial Candidates on the Ballot for Retention in Cook County

Appellate Court

Bertina Lampkin – Well Qualified

Hon. Bertina Lampkin was admitted to practice in 1974 and was elected to the Circuit Court in 1992. She was appointed to the First District Appellate Court in 2009 and elected in 2016. She has served as a member of four different Illinois Supreme Court committees and has served as

Chair of two of them, the Criminal Law and Probation Administration Committee and the Illinois Pattern Instructions in Criminal Cases Committee.

As an Appellate Court judge, Justice Lampkin has demonstrated that she meets, and exceeds, the higher standards that the Council uses in evaluating candidates for the Appellate Court. In the 2013 judicial evaluation, lawyers report that Justice Lampkin has exceptional command of substantive law, as well as procedural rules. She is praised for being hardworking and her written opinions are considered to be well-reasoned. She is an active participant in oral arguments and is reported to have a good temperament.

The Council finds Justice Lampkin Well Qualified for the Appellate Court.

Circuit Court

Lewis Nixon – Qualified

Prior to becoming a judge, Lewis Nixon was regional counsel for the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development from 1983 until 2002. Before that, Judge Nixon was a trial attorney for the Burlington Northern Railroad Council Law Department until 1983, after which he was an associate at Conklin & Adler from 1979-1980. Judge Nixon began his professional career as an assistant to the Northern District of Illinois State's Attorney from 1975 to 1979. He became an Associate Judge in 2001 and was elected to the bench in 2002.

Judge Nixon is currently the Supervising Judge of the Mortgage Foreclosure/Mechanics Lien Section of the Chancery Division. Judge Nixon's previous judicial assignments included sitting at the Chancery division hearing Mechanics Lien cases until 2008, when he was appointed Supervising Judge. Judge Nixon is considered to have very good legal ability. He is praised for his courtroom management. Many lawyers praise him for giving pro se litigants information about the process and gives them an opportunity to be heard. Some respondents claim that he can be slow to rule, but most lawyers say that he is a solid jurist who is balancing the duties of an administrator and a trial judge. The Council finds him Qualified for retention.

Kerry M. Kennedy – Qualified

Prior to becoming a judge, Kerry Kennedy worked as Assistant Cook County Public Defender from 1979 to 2002. Currently Judge Kennedy is the Presiding Judge for the Fifth Municipal District. Judge Kennedy is considered to be a knowledgeable jurist doing a good job in his current assignment. The Council finds him Qualified for retention.

Joan E. Powell – Qualified

Prior to becoming a judge, Joan Powell was an Assistant State's Attorney for the Civil Division of Cook County from 2000 to 2006. Between 1996 and 2000 she served as judicial law clerk for two Circuit Court judges. Judge Powell began her professional legal career in 1992 as a solo practitioner of contract cases and family law. Judge Powell was elected to the bench in 2008. She is currently sitting at the Law Division hearing jury trials. Judge Powell's previous judicial assignments included the Commercial Calendar in the Law Division. Before the Law Division, she heard Forcible Entry and Detainer jury cases. Judge Powell is considered to have good legal ability. She is reported to be hard-working and to have a good temperament. The Council finds her Qualified for retention.

Maureen Ward Kirby – Qualified

Maureen Ward Kirby practiced law in Illinois for approximately 12 years before ascending to the bench, where she has served for 19 years. She is currently Presiding Judge of the County Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County. She states that being a judge is the highlight of her career. She believes she is a good judge. The Chicago Council of Lawyers finds her Qualified to continue to serve as a judge in the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Edward A. Arce – Qualified

Edward Arce was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1985. He practiced law for more than 20 years before ascending to the bench. He began his judicial career in Markham for six years in the Domestic Relations Division. He was assigned to the Cook County Domestic Relations Preliminary Calendar in February of 2019 and has served there since then.

Judge Arce has been described by most respondents as an excellent judge. There have been some reports that the judge can be so procedurally driven that he misses opportunities to resolve cases early. However, on balance he does a good job and gives litigants a full opportunity to be heard. The Council finds him qualified to continue to serve as a judge for the Circuit Court.

Thomas J. Byrne – Qualified

Prior to becoming a judge, Thomas John Byrne served as an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney, and was the supervisor in the Third Municipal District for 5 years. Judge Byrne is currently sitting at the Criminal Division of Cook County. Judge Byrne's previous judicial assignments included the Misdemeanor Branch Court of the First Municipal Division from 2008 to 2013. Judge Byrne is considered to have good legal ability. He is praised for his knowledge of the law and for his courtroom management skills. He is reported to provide well-reasoned

rulings. Respondents say he is fair to all parties and that he has a low-key, effective demeanor on the bench. The Council finds him Qualified for retention.

Diana L. Kenworthy – Qualified

Prior to becoming a judge, Diana Kenworthy was an Assistant Cook County Public Defender from 1996 to 2000. In 2004, she began working as an arbitrator for the Circuit Court's Mandatory Arbitration Program before becoming a hearing officer in the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. Between 2000 and 2008 Kenworthy also developed her practice as a partner at Jester, Kenworthy and Eagle LLC. She was elected to the bench in 2008.

Currently, Judge Kenworthy sits in the Trial Section of the Criminal Division. Previously, she served in the Domestic Violence Division and the First Municipal District, in both Traffic Court and the branch courts, where she presided over misdemeanor cases and felony preliminary hearings. Judge Kenworthy is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for her courtroom management skills. She is considered to be adept at dealing with unrepresented parties appearing before her – a substantial number in her current assignment. The Council finds her Qualified for retention.

Kristyna Colleen Ryan – Qualified

Prior to becoming a judge, Kristyna C. Ryan was in private practice. Judge Ryan is currently sitting at the Fourth Municipal District, where she has been since 2010. Additionally, she is assigned to Mental Health Treatment cases and Veteran's Treatment cases. Judge Ryan was elected to the bench in 2008. Judge Ryan had little litigation experience when she was elected to the bench and faced a substantial learning curve. However, lawyers now report that she has become a hard-working jurist with good legal knowledge and ability to manage her courtroom. The Council finds her Qualified for retention.

Ursula Walowski – Qualified

Judge Walowski graduated from IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1993. She has practiced law for approximately 15 years, primarily as an Assistant State's Attorney, before taking the bench in 2008. After spending a few months in the Municipal Division, she was assigned to the Domestic Violence Division, presiding over misdemeanor and felony domestic violence calls, including pleas, trials, sentencings, motions, and orders of protection, and served there from March of 2009 to June of 2016. Since June of 2016, she has presided over a felony trial call in the Criminal Courts building at 26th Street and California.

Judge Walowski is generally deemed to be a fair, diligent, and legally knowledgeable jurist. Though there have been some reports of the judge treating attorneys and litigants harshly, most said they were willing to deal with her impatience and flare-ups because of what a reasonable and knowledgeable jurist she is. On balance, the Council finds her qualified to continue as a member of the Cook County judiciary.

Anthony C. Kyriakopoulos – Qualified

Hon. Anthony C Kyriakopoulos was admitted in 1990. Judge Kyriakopoulos was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2010. Before becoming a judge, he had served as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Money Laundering Unit of the Narcotics Bureau. Judge Kriakopoulos is reported to have good legal ability and temperament. He had substantial litigation experience in complex matters, and was praised for being an honest and zealous prosecutor.

Judge Kyriakopoulos is currently assigned to the Mortgage Foreclosure/Mechanics Lien Section of the Chancery Division. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Caroline Kate Moreland – Qualified

Hon. Caroline Moreland was admitted to practice in Illinois in November 1995. From 1996-2010, she worked as an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney. She was appointed to the bench to fill a judicial vacancy in September 2010. As a prosecutor, Judge Moreland was considered to have good legal ability and temperament. She prosecuted felony matters as a First Chair prosecutor. She is currently assigned to the Chancery Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Thomas J. Carroll – Qualified

Hon. Thomas Carroll was appointed to the bench of the Circuit Court of Cook County by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2011. He was then elected to the bench in 2014. Judge Carroll is currently the Supervising Judge in the Sixth Municipal District, where he hears misdemeanor and traffic cases. Judge Carroll was an Assistant Public Defender for four years, moving from juvenile to misdemeanor to felony work. Then, he was a sole practitioner specializing in criminal defense. He was admitted to the bar in 1988.

Judge Carroll is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for his temperament and his fairness. His rulings are reported to be well-reasoned and thoughtful. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Andrea M. Buford – Qualified

Hon. Andrea Michele Buford was admitted to practice in 1986. She was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2011. Before becoming a judge, she had been a sole practitioner since 2001. She served as a Hearing Officer with the Illinois State Board of Education, a Commissioner with the Illinois Court of Claims, and a Hearing Officer with the Illinois Department of Human Services. From 1998 to 2001 she was a Partner with Buford Peters Ware & Zanzitis, and was an Associate and then a Partner with Jones Ware & Grenard from 1986 to 1998. She is exceptionally active in pro bono service and community activities.

Judge Buford is reported to have good legal ability, a good temperament and a breadth of experience. She is considered to be hard-working and always well prepared. Judge Buford is currently the Presiding Judge of the Child Protection Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

John Michael Allegretti – Qualified

Hon. John Allegretti has been a lawyer since 1995. Before becoming a judge, he was most recently the General Counsel to the Office of the Cook County Assessor's Office. After graduating from law school, he did domestic relations and bankruptcy work in a private firm for two years. He then served as a hearing officer for the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board. From 2001 to 2005 he served as a Cook County Assistant State's Attorney doing civil rights and tort litigation defense work.

Judge Allegretti is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for being hard-working. He is considered to have a professional, even-tempered demeanor. The Judge is currently assigned to the First Municipal District. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Kristal Rivers – Qualified

Hon. Kristal Rivers was elected to the bench in 2014. Prior to becoming a judge, she served as an Assistant Illinois Attorney General, where she practiced in the Sexually Violent Persons Bureau. She served as a Dallas County, Texas Assistant District Attorney from 1996-2000. In 2000, she returned to Illinois and, from 2001 to 2010, practiced law as a solo practitioner and then as a member of a small firm. Judge Rivers was previously assigned to the Juvenile Justice Division and is currently assigned to the Fifth Municipal District. She is reported to have a good knowledge of the law and manages her courtroom efficiently and with respect for all persons. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Cook County Circuit Court.

Steven G. Watkins – Qualified

Hon. Steven G. Watkins was admitted to practice in 1991. From 2001-2014, he was a sole practitioner focusing on criminal defense, civil litigation, and real estate work. Between 1991 and 2000, he was the founding partner of a three-lawyer firm. At the time of his evaluation interview, Judge Watkins reported that he had acted as lead counsel in 10 jury trials in criminal matters, one civil jury trial, at least 43 bench trials in criminal matters, and four civil bench trials.

Judge Watkins is considered to have a low-key, professional demeanor and is considered a diligent attorney. He is currently Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Abbey Fishman Romanek – Qualified

Hon. Abbey Fishman Romanek graduated from IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1987 after having received earlier degrees in Social Work. She practiced law for 27 years, working for multiple law firms with a focus on medical malpractice, and spent three years with the Illinois Attorney General's office working on Medicare fraud cases. She was also an adjunct professor at Chicago-Kent. Since taking the bench in 2014, she initially served a year in the Municipal Division before being assigned to an individual calendar in the Domestic Relations Division in the Daley Center in December of 2015. She is currently a Supervising Judge in that Division.

Judge Fishman Romanek is a well-respected member of the judiciary. She receives high marks for her knowledge of the law, her professionalism, and her extensive community activities. Most respondents were complimentary of the Judge's temperament, though a few respondents said that the judge could occasionally get irritable when she is frustrated by litigants' failures to follow her rules. She has handled her call competently and efficiently. The Council finds her Qualified for retention.

Judith C. Rice—Qualified

Hon. Judith Rice was admitted to practice law in 1988. She was elected to the bench in 2014 and served in both First Municipal and Domestic Relations. Since 2021, she has served as Presiding Judge of the Domestic Violence Division. Judge Rice is considered to be very smart and has extensive experience as a government official and in the banking sector. She is reported to have a very good temperament and a high degree of professionalism. She is praised as an excellent administrator and dedicated public servant. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Patrick Kevin Coughlin – Qualified

Patrick Kevin Coughlin was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1996 and became an Assistant State's Attorney in 1997. In 2002, he moved to the Complex Narcotics Unit, which is an especially demanding assignment. As lead trial counsel, he reported taking 15 criminal cases to a jury verdict and around 100 to a bench verdict. Before becoming a judge, he was a career prosecutor who received praise as having good legal ability and temperament. He is assigned to the Sixth Municipal District. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Megan Elizabeth Goldish – Qualified

Hon. Megan Goldish was admitted to practice in 1997. She was an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney, working as a First Chair prosecutor in a felony trial courtroom. She served as the First Chair in the WINGSS Felony Prostitution Call, a well-respected diversion program. Judge Goldish has substantial experience in complex litigation, and is involved in substantial pro bono and civic matters. She is considered to have good legal ability and temperament, and she is praised for being hard-working and knowledgeable. She is assigned to the Domestic Violence Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Anjana M. J. Hansen – Qualified

Anjana Hansen was admitted to practice in 1998. She was a contract attorney with the City of Evanston, conducting administrative hearings in the areas of police, property standards, health, and fire. She has served as the Alderman for the 9th Ward of the City of Evanston. She was a former Assistant Cook County State's Attorney. She was in part responsible for establishing an administrative hearings unit within the State's Attorney's Office, which included educating potential witnesses about the legal requirements.

Judge Hansen is considered to have good legal ability and temperament, and is very active in community activities. She is the Deputy Presiding Judge in the Second Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Robert D. Kuzas – Qualified

Hon. Robert Kuzas was admitted to practice in 1989. He was a solo practitioner, where he focused on criminal defense, personal injury, and labor relations cases. He was in private practice throughout his career. Judge Kuzas has substantial experience in a variety of more complex litigation matters. He is considered to have good legal ability and temperament. As an attorney, he was praised for his litigation skills. He is reported to be exceptionally hard-working and

knowledgeable. Judge Kuzas is assigned to the First Municipal District. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Maritza Martinez – Qualified

Judge Martinez is a 1989 graduate of Loyola Law School. She was in private practice for 25 years handling a wide variety of matters before taking the bench in 2014. After serving in a variety of positions between 2014 and 2016, she was assigned to an individual calendar in the Domestic Relations Division in the Daley Center and has served there for the past ten years.

Judge Martinez is a very competent, thorough, and hard-working judge who generally receives high marks for her work. She is known to be very direct and efficient. She is generally described as stern but fair, notwithstanding a few negative comments from respondents. The Council finds her qualified to continue as a Circuit Court judge.

Terrence J. McGuire – Qualified

Hon. Terrence McGuire was elected to the Circuit Court of Cook County in 2014. Prior to becoming a judge, he was a sole practitioner focused on estate planning, probate, and real estate transactions. He was also an Administrative Law Judge in ordinance enforcement proceedings. He had little litigation experience in more complex matters and had little experience in probate law when he was assigned to the Probate Division. By all accounts, he worked hard to reduce the size of the learning curve and today is a well-respected jurist. He is considered knowledgeable and is praised for the fairness and respect that he shows all parties. He is praised for being decisive. Judge McGuire is assigned to the Decedent Estates Section of the Probate Division.

Bridget Anne Mitchell – Qualified

Hon. Bridget Anne Mitchell was admitted to practice in 1981. She was in private practice, with an extensive record of civil litigation in more complex matters and with experience with both bench and jury trials. Much of her practice involved tort defense, medical malpractice, and wrongful death cases. She is considered to have good legal ability and temperament. She is assigned to the Trial Section of the Law Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

James P. Pieczonka – Qualified

Hon. James Pieczonka was elected to the Cook County Circuit Court in 2014. Prior to becoming a judge, he spent most of his career as a sole practitioner, doing both transactional work and litigation. In addition to his legal practice, he was involved in real estate development. From

1985-1996, he also worked as an Administrative Law Judge for the Illinois Department of Revenue in the Hearings Division.

Judge Pieczonka had limited litigation experience when he was elected. But lawyers say that he has overcome that weakness and has become a respected jurist. He is consistently described as being prepared and having a full understanding of the issues before him. He is praised for the thoroughness and quality of his rulings. He is assigned to the Third Municipal District. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Patricia O'Brien Sheahan – Qualified

Hon. Patricia O'Brien Sheahan was admitted to practice in 1996. Before becoming a judge, she was the Associate General Counsel of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, where she oversaw all litigation and claims made against her employer and its employees. She handled case investigations, pretrial discovery, and settlement negotiation. She handled and defended all employment/labor matters and claims before the EEOC, Illinois Department of Human Rights, and other administrative tribunals, including preparation and questioning of witnesses. She prepared appellate briefs filed in both the Illinois Supreme Court and in the Illinois Appellate Court. From 1996 to 1999 she was a litigation associate with Baker & McKenzie in Chicago, working in the litigation and employment litigation practice groups. She reports that during her time at Baker, she first chaired a jury trial, represented clients in evidentiary proceedings, defended and took more than 50 depositions, and had an active motion practice. She has been active in community affairs.

Lawyers report that Judge Sheahan has good legal ability. She is praised for the quality of her work product and is considered to be knowledgeable and always prepared. Judge Sheahan is currently in the Trial Section of the Law Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Michael A. Forti – Qualified

Hon. Michael A. Forti was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1980. In 2016, he was appointed a Circuit Judge by the Illinois Supreme Court and was elected by the Circuit Judges in 2019 as an Associate Judge. He is currently assigned to an individual calendar in the Domestic Relations Division. Previously he was Chief Counsel and Ethics Officer at the Illinois Department of Transportation (2012-2015); Deputy Corporation Counsel (1999-2012) and Chief Assistant Corporation Counsel (1994-1998) for the City of Chicago Department of Law; and associate (1980-1988) and equity and income partner (1988-1994) at Bell Boyd & Lloyd (now K&L Gates), where he handled commercial litigation and antitrust counseling.

Judge Forti was considered to be a good attorney with good legal ability and temperament. As a judge, he continues to receive very positive marks. He has demonstrated his ability to handle a high volume call and is praised for his handling of pro se litigants – respectful and informative without going beyond the role of judge. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Nichole C. Patton – Qualified

Hon. Nicole Catina Patton was admitted to practice in 1997. From 2010 until becoming a judge, she served as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney, focusing on court proceedings involving mental health commitments. From 1997 to 2001 she served as an Assistant Cook County State’s attorney doing both civil and criminal matters. From 2001 to 2002, she was an attorney with Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, and from 2003 to 2010, she was with small firms or worked as a sole practitioner. She is considered to be knowledgeable about the law and was previously described as a “go to” person in the State’s Attorney’s Office.

Judge Patton is considered to have good legal ability. She was previously praised as a good lawyer – a zealous advocate who was trustworthy and respectful both to clients and opposing counsel. She is active in community matters. Judge Patton sits in the Trial Section of the Law Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Sondra Nicole Denmark – Qualified

Hon. Sondra Nicole Denmark was admitted to practice in 2004 and was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2018. Before taking the bench, she served as an Assistant Will County State’s Attorney since 2008, and was an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney from 2004 to 2007. Judge Denmark is considered to have good legal ability and temperament. She has substantial litigation experience.

Judge Denmark is a Supervising Judge in the Civil Jury Section of the First Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Gerardo Tristan, Jr. – Qualified

Hon. Gerardo Tristan Jr. was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2002 and was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2019. Before becoming a judge, he worked at Tristan & Cervantes as an associate, assisting the partners in their day-to-day legal obligations, focusing on labor, estate and business law. Then in 2003, Mr. Tristan began serving as an Assistant Cook County State’s Attorney.

Judge Tristan is considered to have good legal ability and had substantial litigation experience in more complex matters before becoming a judge. He is reported to have a good temperament and respondents praised his fairness. Judge Tristan is assigned to the Civil Jury Section of the First Municipal District. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Lynn Weaver Boyle – Qualified

Lynn Weaver Boyle was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1990. Before becoming a judge, she was a partner at Grotefeld, Hoffmann, Schleiter, Gordon, Ochoa, & Evinger, where she worked starting in 2007. There, she handled commercial litigation matters with a focus on contract, tort, product liability, and construction defects. Before that, she was a partner at Grotefeld & Denenberg (1999-2007) and an Assistant State's Attorney at the Cook County State's Attorney Office (1990-1999), where she worked in the Felony Trial Division, as well as the Narcotics Unit and Gang Crimes Unit of the Special Prosecutions Bureau. She provided pro bono services for Wills for Heroes.

Judge Boyle is considered to have good legal ability. She has substantial trial experience, particularly while an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney, and has litigation experience, as well. She is a respected practitioner with a good temperament. Judge Boyle is in the General Chancery Section of the Chancery Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Daniel Edward Maloney – Qualified

Hon. Daniel Edward Maloney was admitted to practice in 2001. He was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2019. Before taking the bench, Judge Maloney served as an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney. He was assigned to the Complex Narcotics Unit of Cook County State's Attorney's Office. For two years, he had been the sole Assistant State's Attorney assigned to the DEA/HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) Strike Force. While there, he assisted law enforcement agencies in the investigation and prosecution of high level narcotics dealers. Judge Maloney had been employed within the Cook County State's Attorney's Office from 2001 to his appointment to the bench. He has also worked within the Special Prosecutions Bureau and the Criminal Prosecutions Bureau.

As a lawyer, Judge Maloney is considered to have good legal ability and has substantial experience in prosecuting complex criminal law matters, including murder cases. He is praised for his courtroom skills and for his temperament. He is reported to be an excellent mentor to less experienced lawyers. Judge Maloney sits in the Sixth Municipal District, where he hears preliminary hearings. He also presides over three Problem-Solving Courts: Drug Treatment, Mental Health Treatment, and Veterans Treatment. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Thomas M. Cushing – Qualified

Hon. Thomas Maloney Cushing was admitted to practice in Illinois in 1988. He was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2019. Before taking the bench, he was of counsel to the offices of Christopher A. Kreid and Associates, focusing on commercial and chancery litigation. From 2006-2010, he was Senior Vice President for Membership at the Chicago Climate Exchange, applying his legal skills in a business/environmental policy role. From 2005-2006, he was principal in his own law practice, specializing in personal injury practice. During this time, he also assisted Counsel to the Shakman Decree Monitor. From 1988-2005, he was an associate at Ambrose & Cushing, specializing in civil trials, particularly personal injury, professional malpractice, and municipal liability. Since 2013, he has volunteered as a Hearing Board Member at the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission.

As a lawyer, Judge Cushing is reported to have been a solid practitioner with very good ability and an excellent temperament. He has substantial litigation experience in complex matters, and has been praised for his litigation skills and for his temperament. He was involved with numerous community activities, including teaching and environmental advocacy. He is assigned to the Trial Section of the Law Division. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

John G. Mulroe – Qualified

Judge John Mulroe was admitted to practice in 1988. He was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2019. Before being appointed to the bench, he served in the Illinois legislature as a Senator from 10th Senate District. Judge Mulroe has served as an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney, a hearing officer with the Chicago Park District and an arbitrator with the Cook County Mandatory Program. His professional background includes working as a Certified Public Accountant.

As an attorney, Judge Mulroe was considered to have good legal ability and was respected for his trial skills and for his integrity. He was reported to have a very good temperament. Judge Mulroe is assigned an individual calendar in the Juvenile Justice Division. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Tyria B. Walton – Qualified

Hon. Tyria B. Walton was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1997. She served as an Assistant Public Defender and a Grade IV Murder Task Force Attorney at the Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender. Judge Walton is considered to have very good legal ability and has substantial litigation experience in complex matters. She is praised for her trial skills, her diligence and for

her integrity. She is considered to be exceptionally knowledgeable and serves as a mentor to less experienced attorneys. Judge Walton is assigned to the Criminal Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Erin Haggerty Antoinetti – Qualified

Hon. Erin Haggerty Antoinetti was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1991. She was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in June 2019. Prior to taking the bench, she worked as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Criminal Division of the Cook County State's Attorney Office, where she was assigned to Central Bond Court, a position she held for more than 17 years. Between 1991 and 1994, she was an associate at Bresnahan & Garvey, an insurance defense firm. Since June 2019 she has been assigned to the First Municipal District assigned to traffic, civil non-jury, eviction, and pro se courtrooms. She has presided over bench trials, motions to dismiss, motions for sanctions, and motions to quash arrest and suppress evidence.

As a lawyer, Judge Antoinetti has spent most of her professional career in Central Bond Court, where she was praised as professional, knowledgeable, and organized. She had litigation experience in more complex matters earlier in her career. As a Judge, she is reported to demonstrate good legal ability, temperament, and the ability to manage high volume courtrooms. She is assigned to the Sixth Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Teresa Molina-Gonzalez – Qualified

Hon. Teresa Molina-Gonzalez was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2001. Since July of 2019, she has served as a Cook County Circuit Court Judge. She is currently assigned to the Fourth Municipal District. Before becoming a judge, she served as Chief of Prosecutions for the Division of Real Estate in the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (2016-2019) and as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney Office (2001-2016), where she prosecuted criminal felonies and misdemeanors as well as civil cases related to the enforcement of child support.

Judge Molina is considered to have good legal ability. She had received good marks as a hard-working prosecutor before taking the bench. She is considered to be a good jurist in the limited time she has been on the bench. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Patricia M. Fallon – Qualified

Hon. Patricia Maria Fallon was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2001. Since 2017, she has served as Chief of Human Resources for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds. From 2004 to 2017, she worked for the Labor and Employment Unit of the Cook County State's Attorney Office, where

she served as an Assistant State's Attorney and also as a Supervisor (2015-17) and Deputy Supervisor (2013-2015).

Judge Fallon is considered to have good legal ability and has litigation experience in both state and federal court. She is described as hard-working with a good temperament, and is praised for her supervisory skills. She is currently assigned an individual calendar in the Domestic Relations Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Sheree Desiree Henry – Qualified

Hon. Sheree D. Henry was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1994 and was appointed to the bench of the Circuit Court in August of 2019. From 1999-2019, she was an Assistant Public Defender in Cook County Public Defender's Office, where she represents indigent clients in felony cases. She also worked as an Assistant Public Guardian in the Cook County Public Guardian's Office (1995-1999), where she represented abused and neglected children in Juvenile Court.

Judge Henry is considered to have good legal ability with substantial bench and jury litigation experience in a variety of criminal law matters. Respondents generally say that she is a good lawyer with good trial skills. Judge Henry is currently assigned to the Fourth Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Celestia L. Mays – Qualified

Hon. Celestia L. Mays was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1990 and was appointed to the Circuit Court by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2019. Before taking the bench, she was principal of Celestia L. Mays, P.C., where she practiced in family law and probate law, and handled real estate closings. She previously worked as an associate at Bourgeois & Bourgeois (1994-1997); and at the Los Angeles County law firms of McIntosh, Schmidt & Long (1991-1994, law clerk); and Mercer & Zinder (1988-1991, law clerk). She has served on the board of directors of the Black Women Lawyers' Association of Greater Chicago; as the deputy regional director and treasurer of Region VII of the National Bar Association; and in a variety of offices at the Cook County Bar Association, including president. She is a former board member of Legal Aid Chicago.

Judge Mays is considered to have very good legal ability and is praised for her temperament. She has substantial litigation experience and is reported to be an excellent practitioner with great integrity. She is praised for her litigation skills. She is exceptionally active in community activities. Judge Mays is currently assigned to the Fourth Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention for the Circuit Court.

Levander Smith, Jr. – Qualified

Hon. Levander Smith, Jr. was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1993 and was elected by the Circuit Judges in December 2019 to be an Associate Judge. Before taking the bench, he was a litigation attorney at the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). Previously he was supervisory regional counsel for DCFS (2011-2015) in St. Clair County, Illinois; Assistant Attorney General in the Office of the Attorney General in Missouri, Labor Division (2006-2011); associate at Cordell & Cordell, P.C. (2005); Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney Office (2003-2004); intermediate attorney in the St. Louis (Missouri) Family Court (2000-2003); and regional counsel and field regional counsel at DCFS in Cook County (1993-1999) and St. Clair County (1999-2000).

Judge Smith has substantial litigation experience and is considered to have good legal ability. He is praised for his trial skills. He is reported to have a good temperament. Judge Smith is currently assigned to the Child Protection Division. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Julie Bess Aimen – Qualified

Hon. Julie Bess Aimen was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1984. Before taking the bench, she had a solo private practice since 1986, specializing in criminal, family, municipal, and civil rights law. From 1984 to 1986, Judge Aimen was an Assistant Appellate Defender with the Office of the State Appellate Defender (OSAD). She was also a Hearing Officer for the City of Chicago Department of Revenue (1992-1997). She taught Trial Advocacy and, since 1999, was a judge for the National Trial Advocacy Competition. Judge Aimen has been a chair-qualified Cook County Arbitrator since 1990 and is a past president of Illinois Attorneys for Criminal Justice.

Judge Aimen is considered to have very good legal ability and a good temperament. She has extensive complex litigation experience in the areas of criminal law, family law, civil rights, and appellate law. Her integrity is unquestioned. Judge Aimen is highly regarded as an excellent practitioner and she is praised for her work in improving the administration of justice through her pro bono efforts. She is currently assigned an individual calendar in the Domestic Relations Division. The Council considers Judge Aimen to be Qualified to be retained on the Circuit Court.

Laura Ayala-Gonzalez – Qualified

Hon. Laura Ayala-Gonzalez was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2003. For 14 years, she worked as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney Office. She was a first chair in the Felony Trial Division.

Judge Ayala-Gonzalez is considered to have good legal ability and was praised for her trial skills. She has substantial trial experience in complex matters. She is reported to have a very good temperament. Judge Ayala-Gonzalez is currently assigned to the Criminal Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Krista D. Butler – Qualified

Judge Butler was elected to the 1st Subcircuit in 2020 running unopposed. She had previously served in a variety of positions with various State agencies. She began her judicial career in Traffic Court, then moved to the First Municipal Division in Courtroom 1406 where she primarily handled property disputes involving commercial and residential Landlord Tenant cases for 3 years. She recently transferred to Courtroom 1505 where she continues to hear a variety of cases in the First Municipal Division. Respondents describe her as fair and hard working. She shows respect for all litigants and is especially praised for her handling of self-represented litigants. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Maire Aileen Dempsey – Qualified

Hon. Maire A. Dempsey was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2002. From 2016-2020, she served as a Partner at Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym, Ltd., where she was a medical malpractice defense litigator. Previously, she also handled medical malpractice defense matters at Hickey Mella & Associates, where she was an Associate Attorney (2008-2015).

Judge Dempsey is considered to have good legal ability. She has been praised for her temperament and her litigation skills. She has substantial litigation experience in more complex matters. She is currently assigned to the Motion Section of the Law Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Jamie Guerra Dickler – Qualified

Hon. Jamie Guerra Dickler was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2005. From 2005-2020, she worked as an Assistant State's Attorney at the Cook County State's Attorney Office, where since 2013 she was assigned to various felony courtrooms and served as lead counsel on over one hundred bench trials. Her other assignments at the State's Attorney Office included various preliminary hearing courtrooms and the Grand Jury, Sex and Homicide Unit, as well as the Felony Review Unit. She also handled various misdemeanor cases there, including domestic violence.

Judge Dickler is praised for her legal ability and for her integrity. She is reported to be highly professional and always well prepared. She is currently assigned to the Minor Guardianship

Estates Section of the Probate Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Jonathan Clark Green – Qualified

Hon. Jonathan C. Green was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1986. Before 2020, he was senior counsel/supervisor of the Department of Law at the City of Chicago, Federal Civil Rights Litigation Division, where is responsible for all aspects of civil rights and torts litigation. From 2003 to 2013, he worked as a principal of the Law Offices of Green and Green, P.C., and of counsel at Rock, Fusco & Garvey Ltd. At both firms, his practice included domestic and international civil litigation, including business and construction litigation, real estate and commercial transactions, and international law.

Judge Green is viewed by many as knowledgeable about substantive and procedural law with good legal ability. Most respondents have reported that he has a good temperament. He is currently assigned to the Commercial Calendar Section of the Law Division. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Mary Catherine Marubio – Qualified

Hon. Mary Catherine Marubio was admitted to practice in 1997. Before 2020, Judge Marubio was an Administrative Law Judge within the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation for the State of Illinois. She presided over formal adversarial hearings throughout the state involving various licensed professionals, such as physicians, real estate brokers and public accountants. Judge Marubio also served as an ethics officer for IDFPR employees and professional boards, where she provided guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the State Employees and Officials Ethics Act. From 1997 to 2012, she was a sole practitioner focusing on criminal defense and immigration matters. She participated in numerous pro bono and charitable community activities.

Judge Marubio is considered to be a smart, solid practitioner with a variety of litigation experiences. She has been praised for her temperament. She has been praised for being able to master the various areas of law that her career has involved, including financial regulation, criminal defense, and immigration. She is the Presiding Judge of the Second Municipal District and the Deputy Presiding Judge of First Appearance Court. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Regina Ann Mescall – Qualified

Hon. Regina Mescall was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2008, but has practiced since 2004. From 2008-2020, she worked as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney Office, where she was a First Chair in the Felony Trial Division and previously served in the Felony Review Unit (2018—Jan. 2019, 2015-2016, 2008-2009), the Felony Trial Division (2016-2018, 2012-2015), and the Preliminary Hearing/Grand Jury Unit (2009-2012). Prior to that, she was Assistant District Attorney in the state of New Mexico (2004-2008). She has been a member in good standing of the National District Attorney's Association.

Judge Mescall is considered to have good legal ability and handles some of the most complex matters in the State's Attorney's Office. She has been praised for her litigation skills and for her professional demeanor. She is currently assigned an individual calendar in the Domestic Relations Division and hears cases in the Fifth Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Lorraine Mary Murphy – Qualified

Hon. Lorraine Mary Murphy was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2003. She was an Assistant State's Attorney at the Cook County State's Attorney Office, where she was First Chair in a felony courtroom at the George Leighton Criminal Courthouse. She was a member of several bar associations, including the Chicago Bar Association, where she served on the Judicial Evaluation Committee.

Judge Murphy is considered to have good legal ability. She is reported to have a good temperament and has been praised for her trial skills. She has substantial experience in complex litigation matters. Judge Murphy is currently assigned to the Second Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Eileen Marie O'Connor – Qualified

Hon. Eileen Marie O'Connor was admitted to practice in 2006. She specialized in civil litigation and worked at several private law firms. Her focus was on personal injury, medical malpractice, product liability, railroad and construction negligence, workplace injuries, and civil rights matters. She handled other cases including criminal law on child abuse matters pro bono. She is considered to have good legal ability and is praised as being hard-working. She has substantial motion practice in more complex legal matters. She is considered to have a good temperament and to be diligent and punctual. Judge O'Connor is currently assigned to the Trial Section of the Law Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Jill Rose Quinn – Qualified

Hon. Jill Rose Quinn was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1983. Judge Quinn began her career at Michael Barford as an associate. She then spent three years at Mevorah and Associates. In 1988, she worked at Jegen and Associates handling municipal law matters. She worked there until she started a solo practice in 1996, focusing on real estate. Additionally, she has worked as a Cook County arbitrator and a DuPage County arbitrator.

Judge Quinn is considered to have good legal ability and temperament, and has substantial litigation experience in more complex legal areas. She is currently assigned to the Team Trial Section of the Domestic Relations Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Pamela Reaves-Harris – Qualified

Hon. Pamela Reaves-Harris was admitted to practice in 1992. She was an Illinois State Representative for the 10th District. From 1996 to 2015 she was a sole practitioner and served as Assistant Vice President/Compliance Officer for Citibank between 1993 and 1995. She has served as an Administrative Law Judge for several municipalities. She is considered to be smart and knowledgeable. She has an extraordinary record of community service and is well respected for her work as a practicing attorney and as an administrative law judge. She has an exemplary temperament. In 2020, the Council was concerned that she had little litigation experience, but noted that her overall experience demonstrated the ability to be a good judge. Judge Reaves-Harris is currently assigned to the Housing Section of the First Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Tiesha L. Smith – Qualified

Judge Taisha Smith was elected to the bench in 2020, following an unsuccessful run in 2018. She failed to seek a review of her candidacies in either of those elections and was accordingly rated “Not Qualified” in those elections. She is now seeking Retention. Judge Smith is a 2006 graduate of Chicago Kent College of Law and she was admitted to the bar in 2007. Prior to becoming a judge she practiced for ten years as an Assistant Public Defender in Cook County, where she served primarily in the Child Protection Division.

Following her election she served for less than two years in the Traffic Division and then spent approximately 3 years in the Child Protection Division, where she received generally good reviews. However, in 2024 she transferred to the Juvenile Division, where she hears delinquency matters and has also a second calendar created to meet the needs of minors involved with DCFS.

Since her transfer to the Juvenile Division there have been a number of problems reported with both her temperament and attendance. She has been described by a number of practitioners as having adopted a hostile temperament. After carefully reviewing her record and seeking an agreement from her to attend a Stress Management course, the Council finds her Qualified to continue to serve on the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Christ Stacey – Qualified

Hon. Christ Stanley Stacey was admitted to practice in 1982. He was a sole practitioner focusing on civil litigation. He was exceptionally active in community affairs. Judge Stacey is considered to have good legal ability and is praised as a solid practitioner with substantial litigation experience and good trial skills. He is reported to have a professional temperament, and is praised for his diligence and integrity. Judge Stacey is currently assigned to the Civil Jury Section of the First Municipal District. The Council finds him Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Perla Tirado – Qualified

Hon. Perla Tirado was admitted to the Illinois bar in 2005. From 2016-2020, she served as the Supervising Attorney of Beyond Legal Aid, a nonprofit legal services provider, where she handled criminal defense, criminal records, traffic, immigration, removal defense, and family law matters. Previously, she handled criminal defense, traffic, immigration, and domestic relations matters as a Solo Practitioner at the Law Office of Perla Tirado (2008-2016), as a Partner at TYT Law (2010), and as a Partner at Tirado Winters, LLP (2007-2008). She also worked as a Contract Attorney for Genson & Gillespie, where she worked on a criminal case involving financial crimes and SEC violations (2007), as an Assistant Public Defender in the Cook County Public Defender Office (2005-2007), and as Staff Attorney at the Cabrini Legal Aid Clinic (2005).

Judge Tirado is considered to have good legal ability and is praised for her knowledge of the law. She is reported to have good temperament and has substantial litigation experience in a variety of areas. She is currently assigned to the Civil Jury Section of the First Municipal District. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Elizabeth Ann Walsh – Qualified

Hon. Elizabeth A. Walsh was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2006. From 2007-2020, she was an Attorney at Bruce Farrel Dorn & Associates, where she handled insurance defense cases. From 2006 to 2007, she was an Associate Attorney at Paul H. Wharton & Associates, where she defended personal injury actions.

Judge Walsh is considered to have good legal ability. She has been praised for her temperament. She has substantial litigation experience. Judge Walsh is currently assigned to the Motion Section of the Law Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.

Maura McMahon Zeller – Qualified

Hon. Maura McMahon Zeller was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1993. For 15 years before she became a judge, she was an Attorney and Solo Practitioner at Maura McMahon Zeller, Attorney at Law, where she focuses on Child Representative, Guardian Ad Litem, and mediation matters. Prior to that, for ten years, she served as an Assistant Public Guardian at the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian.

Judge Zeller is considered to have good legal ability and she is praised for her temperament. She had substantial litigation experience, although her area of practice was narrow. However, she is highly respected for her knowledge and for her skills. Judge Zeller is currently assigned an individual calendar in the Domestic Relations Division. The Council finds her Qualified for retention on the Circuit Court.