



Supreme Court of Illinois

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ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPOINTS LONGTIME JURIST AS CHAIR OF COMMISSION ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Chief Justice Rita B. Garman and the Illinois Supreme Court have announced the appointment of Appellate Court Justice Mary K. Rochford as the new Chair of the Commission on Access to Justice.

Justice Rochford's appointment took effect July 6 and will terminate on June 15, 2017. She replaces Bloomington attorney Timothy W. Kelly, who resigned as Chair on July 6. Mr. Kelly will continue to serve on the Commission as a member.

The Supreme Court created the Commission on Access to Justice (ATJ) in June 2012 to promote, facilitate and enhance equal access to justice with an emphasis on access to Illinois' civil courts and administrative agencies for all people, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

"I am pleased that Justice Mary K. Rochford has agreed to serve as Chair of the Access to Justice Commission," Chief Justice Garman said. "Justice Rochford is not only a highly respected jurist with over two decades of judicial experience; she has also been actively involved in the Access to Justice project since its inception in 2012.

"During that time, she has served as co-chair of several ATJ committees and has shown herself to be a thoughtful and dedicated leader. The Commission, the Court, and the people of Illinois will be well served by her leadership."

Justice Rochford currently serves as co-chair of the Commission's Standardized Forms and Appellate Committees. She has been a member of the judiciary since February 1991, having served as both an associate and circuit judge in Cook County before her election to the First District Appellate Court in November 2010.

"I am honored to be appointed Chair of the Commission. I have enjoyed being a member of the Commission and am dedicated to its work and goals," Justice Rochford said. "I greatly admire the leadership and accomplishments of the previous Chairs—Jeff Colman and Tim Kelly—and the tremendous work and talents of my fellow Commissioners.

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The Commission is made up of 11 volunteer members, seven of whom are appointed by the Supreme Court. The Illinois Bar Foundation, the Chicago Bar Foundation, the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois and the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation appoint one member each.

Justice Rochford was appointed to the Commission in 2012 by the Chicago Bar Foundation. She serves on its Board of Directors.

Mr. Kelly, who resigned as Chair on July 6, said Justice Rochford was the "perfect choice" to lead the Commission and looks forward to continuing their work together.

He has been a member of the Commission since its creation in 2012 and was appointed as Chair in 2014 to succeed Jeffrey D. Colman, a partner at Jenner & Block in Chicago who was the Commission's first Chair and continues to serve as a member.

Mr. Kelly said he views his resignation as an opportunity to give another talented member the chance to lead the "most amazingly energetic and devoted group of professionals I have ever encountered."

"I'm very proud of all that the Commission has accomplished over the past three years and I want to continue to be a part of all they do, but as the newly-elected President of the McLean County Bar Association and the 3rd Vice President of the Illinois Bar Foundation, I have had to cut back on some of my other professional commitments," Mr. Kelly said.

The Commission acts within the structure of the Civil Division of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts under AOIC Director Michael J. Tardy.

Since 2012, the Supreme Court has adopted several of measures in response to the Commission's recommendations, including amending the Judicial Canon of Ethics to permit judges to make reasonable efforts to facilitate the ability of self-represented litigants to be fairly heard and creating a model language access plan to enhance the integrity of judicial proceedings where one or more participants is a non-English speaker.

At the recommendation of the Commission, the Court also adopted measures to improve access to justice by easing attorney licensing requirements for lawyers who are spouses or civil union partners of active military personnel serving in Illinois and expanding the rule allowing law students to represent indigent clients under the supervision of licensed attorneys.

In addition, the Commission has undertaken an initiative to design and implement simplified standard forms for use by pro se litigants in various legal proceedings. The Supreme Court in 2014 approved forms recommended by the Commission related to filing a court appearance, adult name changes and waivers for filing fees. Additional standardized forms are under review.

"I look forward to continuing and building on the Commission's productive and collaborative relationship with the Court and the AOIC. I appreciate the confidence placed in me by Chief Justice Garman and look forward to working with her, Justice Kilbride as the Supreme Court liaison, and the rest of the Court on further advancing access to justice throughout the State."