



Supreme Court of Illinois

December 3, 2021

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPOINTS DE LA CRUZ, DONNELLY AS AT-LARGE CIRCUIT JUDGES OF COOK COUNTY

The Illinois Supreme Court today announced the appointments of Araceli R. De La Cruz and Judge Thomas M. Donnelly as At-Large Circuit Judges in Cook County.

Ms. De La Cruz is being appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Joan O'Brien. Her appointment takes effect on January 6, 2022, and will conclude on December 5, 2022, when the vacancy will be filled by the winner of the November 2022 general election.

"I am greatly honored and humbled by this opportunity to serve," De La Cruz said. "It is an incredible privilege to do so on behalf of the people of Cook County and I am profoundly grateful to Justice Theis and the Illinois Supreme Court for their confidence in me."

Judge Donnelly, as Associate Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, is being appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Sharon Sullivan. His appointment takes effect on December 8 and will conclude on December 5, 2022, when the vacancy will be filled by the winner of the November 2022 general election.

"I am honored that the Illinois Supreme Court has appointed me to serve the citizens of Cook County as a Circuit Judge," Judge Donnelly said. "As always, I will perform my duties to the best of my abilities and attempt to live up to this honor. This appointment by the Illinois Supreme Court affirms my work and dedication as an Associate Judge for the past 19 years and I appreciate the Court's confidence in my judicial service."

Justice Mary Jane Theis recommended the appointments to the full Court following a review of applicants by a 14-person screening committee consisting of judges, lawyers, and Cook County community members. The Hon. Wayne Andersen (Ret.) and the Hon. Patricia Holmes (Ret.) served as Co-Chairs for the screening committee. The additional members were James Botana, the Hon. David Coar (Ret.), Mary Dempsey, Leynee Cruz Flores, John Gallo, Denise Kane, Beth Kaveny, Mike Monico, Michael Rothstein, Sister Cathy Ryan, Richard Waris, and Mark Wojcik. More information on the screening committee is available [here](#).

Ms. De La Cruz has over 20 years of experience in law in a variety of important roles. She most recently has spent 5 years as General Counsel/Chief Administrative Officer at Acero Schools of Chicago. Before joining Acero, she served for two years as the Chief of General Prosecutions for

the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation's Division of Professional Regulation.

From 2009 to 2014, Ms. De La Cruz served in three different roles for the Chicago Transit Authority, first as Chief of Safety and Security Compliance, then as Deputy Chief of Staff, and finally as Chief Safety and Security Officer, Senior Vice President, where she managed a department of over 45 safety, security and compliance professionals who were charged with the oversight of bus and rail transit system safety. And from 2001 to 2009 she served as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, prosecuting hundreds of criminal matters via case review, indictment, motion practice, jury trials, bench trials and settlement conferences.

Ms. De La Cruz earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago and her *Juris Doctor* from the John Marshall Law School, where she was a recipient of the Elmer Kissane Award. Her professional associations include the Chicago Bar Association, the Hispanic Lawyer's Association of Illinois, the Puerto Rican Bar Association, and the Woman's Bar Association.

Judge Donnelly has served as an Associate Judge of Cook County since 2000 and is currently assigned to the Law Division where he hears civil jury trials. He has tried over 300 jury trials and over 1,000 bench trials in his time on the bench. Prior to joining the bench, Judge Donnelly clerked for Justice Mary Ann G. McMorrow and served as an assistant public defender for 13 years.

Judge Donnelly served on the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Pretrial Practices from its inception until its final report and was an appointed judicial representative on the Statutory Court Fee Task Force. He currently sits on the Illinois Judicial College Board of Trustees with a term expiring in 2023 and serves as liaison to the Committee on Judicial Education. From 2016 to 2019, he served as the inaugural chair of the Illinois Judicial College Board, and currently serves on the Illinois Judicial Ethics Committee. He has chaired both the Chicago Bar Association Professional Responsibility Committee and the Illinois State Bar Association Standing Committee on Professional Conduct.

Judge Donnelly earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from St. John's College and his *Juris Doctor* from the Loyola University School of Law. He has taught at Loyola since 1987 where he currently teaches Illinois Civil Litigation Practice and additionally serves on the faculty of the National Judicial College where he teaches hundreds of judges around the country.

Judge Donnelly's awards include the Hon. Mary Ann G. McMorrow Distinguished Service Award from the Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity, the Impact Award from the Center for Disability and Elder Law, and the Harold Sullivan Award from the Illinois Judges Association.