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## **SUPREME COURT CREATES SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON LAWYER CIVILITY**

The Illinois Supreme Court announced Tuesday the creation of a special committee to study and recommend ways for lawyers to be more respectful to each other and their clients.

Fourteen attorneys, appointed from around the state, will sit on the committee, known as the Special Supreme Court Committee on Civility.

Justice Robert R. Thomas will serve as Supreme Court liaison to the committee and David F. Rolewick, an attorney from Wheaton, will serve as its chairperson. The committee is charged with recommending to the Court "ways to promote respectful conduct, as the norm, within the legal profession."

"This is a very worthwhile endeavor," Justice Thomas said. "The Supreme Court's goal in establishing this committee is to discover appropriate ways to promote civility among Illinois attorneys."

Anecdotal and other evidence suggests that lawyers increasingly are becoming more rude to each other and their adversaries' clients, putting aside the politeness and civility that once was considered a hallmark of the profession.

"Lawyers sometimes go beyond what they should in terms of aggressiveness in order to survive in what has become a very competitive profession," said Mr. Rolewick. "Now, a lot of attorneys go out and practice law on their own and there's no system or structure for internship or mentoring young attorneys to help them understand the professional obligations of the practice."

Mr. Rolewick also suggested that part of the problem may be lawyers responding to what they believe the public expects.

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“Something that may be addressed by this committee is the issue of public perception of the law,” said Mr. Rolewick. “The general public wants, because they’ve been watching TV too much, the meanest junkyard dog that they can get, and they think they’re going to win if they hire the meanest, toughest lawyer they can get.

“Attorneys respond to what their clients want and expect. If a client wants a mean lawyer, he’ll get a mean lawyer.”

The idea for establishment of the special committee grew out of a symposium organized by Mr. Rolewick and other friends of the late Roger K. O’Reilly, a Wheaton attorney who, according to those who knew him, epitomized civility.

Justice Thomas, who had offices in the same building as Mr. O’Reilly, was among those who spoke at the symposium last August at the Northern Illinois University College of Law in DeKalb.

Mr. Rolewick said that from comments at the symposium the manifestation of incivility in the courtroom occurs most often in the abuse of discovery practice. Outside the courtroom, he said, attorneys may be verbally abusive, degrading and uncooperative with other attorneys.

“That delays the process and delays the system of justice,” he said.

Each of the seven justices appointed two attorneys to the special committee. In addition to Mr. Rolewick, the members are:

George Black of Morris; Michael H. Cho of Chicago; Robert A. Clifford of Chicago; Laura Clower of Champaign; Charles Colburn of Jacksonville; Gordon B. Nash Jr. of Chicago; John Rekowski of Collinsville; Ronald Samuels of Chicago; Lawrence Templer of Chicago; Richard L. Tognarelli of Collinsville; Debra Walker of Chicago; Edward Walsh of Wheaton; and Sonni C. Williams of Peoria.