

The Review



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CHIEF JUSTICE AMY LYN BLAKE



Governor Maura T. Healey administered the oath of office to **Chief Justice Amy Lyn Blake** on November 14, 2024. The Appeals Court welcomes Chief Justice Blake, who is the eighth, and first female, chief justice of the Massachusetts Appeals Court since its establishment in 1972.

Prior to her appointment to the Appeals Court in 2014, Chief Justice Blake served as an associate justice of the Probate and Family Court from 2008 to 2014. She was previously a partner at Casner & Edwards, LLP; an associate and partner at White, Inker & Aronson; an associate at Yasi & Yasi, PC; and an assistant district

attorney for the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office.

Chief Justice Blake oversees the Appeals Court's 24 associate justices and the court's operations in docketing, hearing, and deciding the majority of civil and criminal appeals taken in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For more information about Chief Justice Blake, please see her court biography [here](#).

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS



Associate Justice Gloria Tan joined the Appeals Court in December, after serving as First Justice of the Massachusetts Juvenile Court in Middlesex County. Justice Tan joined the bench of the Juvenile Court in 2013 and served there as a First Justice since 2019. She began her legal career as an attorney with the Committee for Public Counsel Services, serving in its Boston Superior Court Office and Youth Advocacy Project. She later joined the Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School, serving first as a Clinical Instructor and then as Deputy Director. Justice Tan has served on multiple committees of the Supreme Judicial Court and Trial Court.

For more information about Justice Tan, please see her court biography [here](#).



Associate Justice Chauncey B. Wood joined the Appeals Court in December. Justice Wood was a partner at Wood & Nathanson, LLP, and has been a criminal defense attorney for 30 years focused on defending individuals facing serious criminal charges at trial and on appeal, as well as handling Title IX matters, and addressing the collateral consequences of criminal convictions. He frequently appeared in Massachusetts trial and appellate courts. He served on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers for several years and chaired its Amicus Committee.

For more information about Justice Wood, please see his court biography [here](#).

CHIEF STAFF ATTORNEY NAMED



Chief Justice Amy Lyn Blake named Appeals Court senior staff attorney **Lydia French** as Chief Staff Attorney. After graduating from Boston University School of Law, Lydia was a law clerk in the Appeals Court for consecutive years to **Justice Peter J. Rubin** and then **Justice James R. Milkey** before working in the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General where she acquired an expertise in matters related to the insurance and financial services industries. Lydia returned to the Appeals Court in 2018, working as both a staff attorney and senior staff attorney. Lydia will oversee the court's staff attorneys who perform screening, writing, and editorial work on the court's civil and criminal panel cases.

ASSISTANT CLERK APPOINTMENT



The Justices of the Appeals Court appointed attorney **Carlotta Patten** as an Assistant Clerk in October. Carlotta attended Northeastern University where she majored in criminal justice with a minor in business. After graduating from Suffolk University Law School, Carlotta served as a law clerk to the justices of the Massachusetts Superior Court. She then worked in commercial litigation at large and medium sized law firms before she returned to the Superior Court in Essex County as an assistant clerk, where she focused on civil matters. The court later promoted Carlotta to First Assistant Clerk of the Essex Superior Court in 2020. She served on various trial court committees and MCLE panels during her tenure in Essex Superior. Carlotta is a proud board member of the Essex County Bar Association.

TRAVELING JUSTICE: APPEALS COURT COMPLETES FALL OFFSITE SITTING TOUR



The Appeals Court held four "Traveling Justice" oral argument sessions this fall. In October, **Justices Gregory I. Massing, Vickie L. Henry, and Marguerite T. Grant** heard oral arguments at UMass Law-Dartmouth (pictured above, top left), and **Justices William J. Meade, Maureen Walsh, and Paul Hart Smyth** heard arguments at Western New England University School of Law in Springfield (pictured above, top right).

In November, **Chief Justice Amy Lyn Blake** and **Justices Eric Neyman and Marguerite T. Grant** heard arguments at the Massachusetts School of Law in Andover (pictured above, bottom left), and **Justices Ariane D. Vuono, William J. Meade, and Kathryn E. Hand** sat at UMass-Amherst (pictured above, bottom right).

After each session, the justices spoke with students and answered their questions about the Appeals Court, the appellate process, and being a judge.

The court's "Traveling Justice" program will resume on March 11th, when the Appeals Court hears oral arguments at New England Law | Boston.

LAW CLERKS SWORN INTO THE BAR OF MASSACHUSETTS



The Appeals Court held a swearing-in ceremony for 21 of its current law clerks who passed the July 2024 Massachusetts Bar Exam, and one law clerk who passed the Florida Bar Exam. The court's other law clerks previously were admitted to the Massachusetts Bar. **Chief Justice Amy Lyn Blake** presided over the ceremony that was administered by **Amy Stewart**, First Assistant Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court.

CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE



As discussed at last December's appellate bench-bar conference hosted by the Flaschner Judicial Institute, the Appeals Court, the Supreme Judicial Court, and the courts' vendor partners are developing a new case management system (CMS), which will replace the existing CMS in 2025. The new system, built on a cloud platform, will help manage cases more efficiently from case entry through decision release, and provide a sustainable long-term solution for the appellate courts' needs. This system will include a new public portal for enhanced access to public case information and documents. The courts will announce more details throughout 2025.

INFORMAL BRIEF PILOT PROGRAM

A year ago, the Appeals Court launched an optional ***Informal Brief Pilot Program*** for cases entered on the court's panel docket. The program permits self-represented parties to file an "informal" brief following relaxed guidelines instead of a formal brief that strictly complies with the Massachusetts Rules of Appellate Procedure.

During the pilot's first year, many informal briefs were filed by self-represented appellants and appellees in civil and criminal cases, including by persons confined in a state institution. The briefs were filed most frequently in appeals concerning abuse prevention orders, domestic relations, tort, and matters arising in the Housing Court. The Appeals Court is evaluating the pilot program and has extended it until February 28, 2025, pending any further announcement.

CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION SEMINARS

Appeals Court representatives spoke this fall at multiple legal education seminars. At the Social Law Library, **Chief Justice Amy Lyn Blake** spoke on a panel in *Double Dipping in the Probate Court - Trethewey and other Recent Developments in Family Law*; **Justice Joseph M. Dittkoff** and staff attorneys **Nora Sullivan** and **Monica DeLateur** spoke at a two-part program, *Preserving the Record and Standards of Review*; and **Justice Gregory I. Massing**, spoke on *Computer-Stored and Computer-Generated Evidence, and Everything in Between*.

At MCLE's 10th Annual Appellate Practice Conference in December, **Justices Gregory I. Massing**, **Kathryn E. Hand**, **Marguerite T. Grant**, and **Robert E. Toone, Jr.**, together with **Clerk Paul Tuttle**, discussed various topics including recent developments in the civil and criminal cases, life as a new appellate judge, and court operations.

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