

The Review



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CEREMONIAL OATHS OF OFFICE



In January, **Governor Maura T. Healey** administered the ceremonial oath of office to **Chief Justice Amy Lyn Blake** in the Great Hall of the John Adams Courthouse. Speakers included Governor Healey, **Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll**, **SJC Justice Gabrielle Wolohojian**, and Appeals Court **Justices William Meade** and **Kathryn Hand**.

In February, Governor Healey administered ceremonial oaths of office to **Justice Gloria Tan** and **Justice Chauncey Wood**. Speakers included Governor Healey, Chief Justice Blake, **Juvenile Court Chief Justice Dana M. Gershengorn** and **Judge Kerry A. Ahern, Elizabeth Dembitzer, Esq.**, and **Katie Naples-Mitchel, Esq.** (photo credits, Joshua Qualls/Governor's Press Office)



JUDICIAL ENGAGEMENT



Chief Justice Blake and **Julie Goldman**, First Assistant Clerk, recently met with Boston Bar Association leadership to discuss the Appeals Court. From left, Julie Goldman; **Matthew McTygue**, BBA President; Chief Justice Blake; **Mark Fleming**, BBA Vice President; **Domonique Williams**, BBA Director of Access to Justice Initiatives; and **Michael Avitzur**, BBA Government Relations Director.



Justices Andrew M. D'Angelo and **Christopher P. Hodgens**, and staff attorney **Monica DeLateur**, presided at the Goodwin Trial Advocacy Competition at Suffolk University Law School.

In February, **Justice Joseph M. Ditzkoff** and Superior Court **Judge Beverly Cannone** delivered a one-hour presentation to over fifty Superior Court judges on the new rules for criminal pretrial discovery (Rules 14, 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.4). The program followed a two-hour class on the same topic presented by the Social Law Library that involved additional speakers and was attended by over 300 persons.

INTERNATIONAL VISITOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



Appeals Court justices and staff recently met with delegates from 25 countries under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program to explore the "Rule of Law and the U.S. Judicial System." The program is designed to examine the workings of an independent judiciary as well as promote the advancement of fair, transparent, accessible, and independent judiciaries around the world.

Chief Justice Blake and **Justices Peter J. Rubin, Kenneth V. Desmond, Jr., Sookyung Shin, Rachel E. Hershfang**, Court Administrator **Gina DeRossi**, Clerk **Paul Tuttle**, and Administrative Attorney **Tom Carter** met with the delegates. Discussion topics included the state and federal judicial systems, criminal and civil appeals, collaborative decision making, efilg and electronic case management, how judges use technology to prepare for oral argument and draft decisions, public livestreaming of oral argument, and court management and structure in the digital age. The visit was arranged by World Boston and Meridian International Center.

"APPEALS ON WHEELS" ORAL ARGUMENT SESSIONS



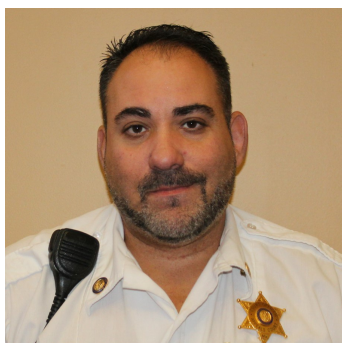
In March, Appeals Court justices and staff held a "Traveling Justice" session at New England Law Boston. **Justices Kenneth V. Desmond, Jr., Joseph M. Dittkoff, and John Englander** heard oral argument in civil and criminal appeals. After the session concluded, the justices answered questions from students. The Appeals Court appreciates all the advocates and faculty throughout the Commonwealth who support our "Appeals on Wheels" sessions.

Upcoming sittings outside the John Adams Courthouse include:

- **Suffolk University Law School**, Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 9:30 a.m., **Justices Meade, Hodgens, and Toone**.

- **Worcester Superior Court**, Thursday, May 1, 2025 (Law Day), 9:30 a.m., **Justices Massing, Hand, and Hershfang**.
- **Essex Probate and Family Court**, in Salem, Tuesday, May 13, 2025, 9:30 a.m., **Chief Justice Blake** and **Justices Ditkoff and Brennan**.
- **Barnstable Superior Court**, Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 9:30 a.m., with the Justices to be announced.

EMPLOYEE SUCCESS



This winter the Appeals Court congratulated several employees who were recently promoted to new positions: **Amedeo (AJ) Guarino**, Assistant Chief Court Officer (top left); **Matt Cutting**, Appellate Assignments Administrator (top right); **John Nolan**, Law Clerk (bottom left); and, **Yoshiko Taylor**, Lead Appeals Administrator (bottom right). These four employees already have a combined 47 years of service to the Appeals Court. We are fortunate to have their expertise and commitment to the Appeals Court and hope they remain for another 47 years!

Welcome to the Appeals Court team!

In addition, the Appeals Court welcomed **Katelyn Fisher** as a Research Attorney in the Clerk's Office. Katelyn joined the Appeals Court from the Juvenile Court where she was a judicial law clerk after graduating summa cum laude from the University of Massachusetts School of Law, where she was the lead editor for the UMass Law Review.



STATE BUDGET HEARING TESTIMONY



Chief Justice Blake represented the Appeals Court at the Joint Committee on Ways and Means on March 28th, in Clinton, MA, where she and other court leaders from the Massachusetts Judicial Branch presented testimony in support of their Fiscal Year 2026 budget requests. Court Administrator **Gina DeRossi** and Fiscal Director **Thuy-Nhung ("Twee") Nguyen** also supported the Appeals Court at the budget hearing.

Pictured above from left to right are **Chief Justice Kimberly S. Budd** of the Supreme Judicial Court, **Chief Justice Blake**, **Chief Justice Heidi E. Brieger** of the Trial Court, and **Thomas G. Ambrosino**, Court Administrator of the Trial Court.

CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE



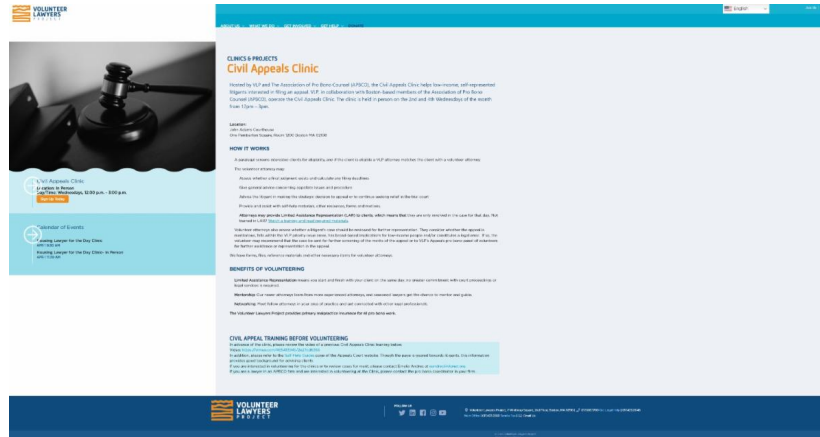
The Appeals Court, the Supreme Judicial Court, and their vendor partners are continuing to make progress on developing a new appellate case management system (CMS) to be launched in 2025. This new cloud-based system will replace the current appellate CMS and provide a more modern, long-term solution for the appellate courts. It will also feature a new public web portal to enhance access to case information and public case documents. Additional updates will be shared throughout 2025 as progress continues.

INFORMAL BRIEF PILOT PROGRAM: Continuation and Enhancements

Chief Justice Blake and the Justices announced that the court is continuing its [Informal Brief Pilot Program](#) through June 2026. The program provides self-represented parties the option to file an informal brief instead of a formal brief that strictly complies with the Massachusetts Rules of Appellate Procedure. Many self-represented parties have successfully filed an informal brief and, in some cases, an informal record appendix. The filers include appellants and appellees in civil and criminal cases, including prisoners. Informal briefs have been filed in a variety of cases including, most frequently, in appeals related to restraining orders, child support, alimony, and evictions.

The court has posted revised templates, sample informal briefs and appendix table of contents, and a [how-to video on the court's YouTube channel](#).

CIVIL APPEALS CLINIC



The Volunteer Lawyers Project will resume holding the pro bono Civil Appeals Clinic in person at the John Adams Courthouse, in the lobby of the Appeals Court Clerk's Office. The Clinic went fully remote during the pandemic. Beginning April 9, 2025, the Clinic will be open every 2nd and 4th Wednesday, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Pro bono assistance is need based. Volunteer attorneys meet with qualified self-represented parties in person. A remote option for persons to meet with the pro bono attorneys who are at the courthouse will also be available during the above hours.

The Civil Appeals Clinic accepts many case types, including appeals arising in family and guardianship proceedings, 209A and 258E orders, housing matters, consumer collections, and employment litigation. The Volunteer Lawyers Project is hosting an educational training for new volunteer attorneys on April 2, 2025, at 10 a.m. For additional information, including how to volunteer as a pro bono attorney, please visit <https://vlpnet.org/civil-appeals-clinic/>. If you are interested in volunteering for the clinics or to review cases for merit, please contact Emelia Andres at eandres@vlpnet.org.

PRACTICE NOTE FROM THE CLERK'S OFFICE by Paul Tuttle, Clerk



Most appeals are fully available for public inspection. Some, such as child welfare appeals or sex offender classification appeals, are fully impounded. Electronic filing in these appeals is relatively easy. No document should be filed as impounded in the former, and all documents are impounded in the second. Difficulties arise in the growing number of cases in which some, but not all, of the record on appeal is sealed or impounded. In those cases, it is important that the filer correctly determine whether the document that they are e-filing is covered by the impoundment order or rule. The filer's designation during the e-filing process is automatically transferred to the

Appeals Court docket and affects the clerk's office's ability to protect sensitive information while providing maximum transparency to appellate proceedings. The importance of mindful e-filing in partially-impounded appeals will grow as the court increases self-help access to records online.

LAW STUDENT JUDICIAL INTERNSHIPS

The Appeals Court has welcomed several law students as judicial interns for the spring semester. The interns include: **Jackson Cederholm**, Boston University School of Law, intern to Justice Henry; **Stacey Charlot**, intern to Justice Massing, Suffolk University School of Law; **Teresa Guerra**, New England Law Boston, intern to Chief Justice Blake; **Madison Parola**, New England Law Boston, intern to Justice Walsh; **Gustav (Gus) Wachhaus**, New England Law Boston, intern to Justice Ditkoff; **Ashley Walters**, Boston College Law School, intern to Justice Hershfang; and, **Eliot Usherenko**, Boston College Law School, intern to Justice Henry.

APPEALS COURT HERSTORY

To commemorate Women's History Month, the Appeals Court celebrates the achievements of three pioneering women whose contributions were crucial to the court's development.

With the appointment of **Justice Edith W. Fine** in 1984, the court reached a milestone, achieving a complement of three women on the bench. This historic moment culminated on January 21, 1986, with the sitting of the court's first all-women panel, consisting of **Justices Charlotte Anne Perretta, Raya S. Dreben**, and Fine.



Justice Charlotte Anne
Perretta



Justice Raya S. Dreben



Justice Edith W. Fine

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