



**PATHWAYS
TO THE
BENCH**

JUDGES' PANEL

PRESENTED BY SBA & LAMBDAΣ

MEET THE JUDGES

THE HONORABLE CATHERINE SCHNEIDER

Catherine A. Schneider has served as a Circuit Judge in the Circuit Court of Cook County since December of 2016.

She is currently assigned to a jury trial room in the First Municipal District. Prior to that she presided in 1501 of First Municipal District for three years, where she heard motions and was the assignment judge for the cases in the court's mandatory arbitration program. Judge Schneider received her JD from Loyola University Chicago School of Law in 1994.

She began her legal career in private practice doing insurance defense litigation. Her practice subsequently included landlord tenant litigation, commercial collection litigation, and commercial and residential real estate transactions. For the last 10 years of her practice before joining the bench, Judge Schneider led the work of CARPLS, a non-profit legal aid organization providing legal services to self-represented litigants appearing in the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Judge Schneider is the Co-Chair of the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice Forms Committee as well as the Chair of that group's Civil Procedures Forms Sub Committee.

Judge Schneider is a member of the Chicago Bar Association, a member of LAGBAC, is a Director of the Illinois Judges Association and the Secretary of the Alliance of Illinois Judges.



THE HONORABLE LINDA JOHANNA PAUEL

The Hon. Linda Johanna Pael is an associate judge of the Juvenile Justice Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County. She was elected to the bench in 2014.

Before pursuing a legal career, Pael graduated cum laude with a B.A. from Cornell College. She then went on to earn her J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1991.

After earning a law degree, Pael worked for the firm Sachnoff & Weaver, Ltd. as an attorney specializing in securities law, mechanic's liens, employment discrimination, abortion rights, death penalty defense, and Fourth Amendment strip search violations. From there, she was hired as an attorney for the City of Chicago Law Department, practicing in the Municipal, Chancery and Law Divisions of the Circuit Court. She worked there from 1994 to 2014, before taking the bench seat.

In addition to her services to the court, Pael is a member of the City of Chicago Department of Law's hiring committee, Judicial Selection Committee for Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke, and Indian Woods Community Association. She also serves as an advisor to the DePaul University School of New Learning Masters Program, a mentor for Black Women Lawyer's Association, and founding member of the LGBT Outreach Committee for the City of Chicago's Law Department.



THE HONORABLE MARY COLLEEN ROBERTS

Judge Mary Colleen Roberts, elected in 2006 was the second lesbian elected in Cook County. She is one of the founding members of the Alliance of Illinois Judges, a statewide LGBTQ+ judges association. Since being elected, she has served in both civil and criminal courts. She is currently assigned to the Law Division



THE HONORABLE LEAVANDER "VAN" SMITH, JR.

Judge Smith is a Cook County Circuit Judge assigned to the Child Protection Division of the Cook County Juvenile Court as of November 2, 2020. His immediate prior assignment was to the County Department's Domestic Violence Division where he presided over a civil courtroom for over a year and a half. Judge Smith's first judicial assignment was to the Traffic Division on March 1, 2019.

Throughout his 25+ years as an attorney, Judge Smith practiced law in Illinois (Cook County and Southern IL) and Missouri, primarily in Child Protection, Juvenile Justice and Divorce. He worked as a Prosecutor/State's Attorney (in MO and IL) and as an Associate in a Domestic Relations firm.

He also worked as a Deputy Attorney General for the MO Attorney General's Office in its Worker's Compensation Division (Second Injury Fund).

