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PRESS RELEASE

(October 11, 2016)

Chief Judge Janet DiFiore and the New York State Court of Appeals – the highest court in the state – will hold a historic session in Rochester on Friday, October 14th, Presiding Justice Gerald J. Whalen of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department, announced today.

The Court of Appeals, which is based in Albany, will hear a full calendar of appeals in the M. Dolores Denman Courthouse, located at 50 East Avenue. Friday’s visit will be the first ever sitting of the Court of Appeals in the Denman Courthouse, which is home to the Fourth Department, one of four regional Appellate Division departments in the state. The Court of Appeals last held court in Rochester in 1848 – nearly 50 years before the Appellate Division was created, and more than 150 years before the Fourth Department moved into its own courthouse, separate from the trial courts.

“I am honored that the Fourth Department will host a session of one of the finest high courts in the nation, and I encourage the public to visit our state-of-the-art courthouse and watch a nationally renowned court in action,” Whalen said. “I look forward to welcoming Chief Judge DiFiore and her six colleagues.”

The Court of Appeals will hear oral arguments on four criminal appeals from Rochester, Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Syracuse, and one civil appeal from Buffalo. Arguments will begin at 10:00 a.m. in the Hon. Samuel L. Green Courtroom. The session will be open to the general public.

The visit will be a homecoming of sorts for the senior associate judge on the Court of Appeals, Eugene F. Pigott, Jr., of Buffalo. Judge Pigott, who grew up in the Rochester area, previously served as Presiding Justice of the Fourth Department, from 2000 to 2006, when he was appointed to the Court of Appeals by then-Governor George E. Pataki. Judge Pigott will be retiring at the end of 2016 and Friday's session of the Court of Appeals will be one of his last.

The Fourth Department courthouse was named in honor of the first woman ever to serve as a Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, M. Dolores Denman, who died in January 2000. One of the keynote speakers at the naming ceremony in April 2000 was her good friend, the late Judith S. Kaye, the first woman to serve as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. The ceremony was presided over by then-Presiding Justice Pigott. On Friday, when the Court of Appeals sits for the first time in the Denman Courthouse, it will be under the leadership of Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, who this year became the second woman to head the state's highest court.

Case summaries of the appeals to be argued on Friday, together with day calendars and other information about the Court of Appeals and its judges, are available on the Court of Appeals website: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/appeals/>. A live webcast of the arguments also will be available on the website.