



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Rowan D. Wilson
Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and
the State of New York**

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Date: May 18, 2023

Hon. Joseph A. Zayas Named Chief Administrative Judge

NEW YORK—Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson today announced his appointment of Hon. Joseph A. Zayas as Chief Administrative Judge of the New York State Unified Court System, the highest-ranking administrative position within the New York State Judiciary. The appointment, effective immediately, was made with the approval of the Administrative Board of the Courts, which, along with the Chief Judge, is made up of the Presiding Justice of each of the four departments of New York’s Appellate Division. Judge Zayas succeeds the Hon. Tamiko Amaker, who has been serving as the court system’s acting Chief Administrative Judge since December 2022.

The Chief Administrative Judge supervises the daily administration and operation of the Unified Court System, which has a budget of \$3.3. billion, 3,600 state and locally paid judges and nearly 15,000 non-judicial employees in over 300 courthouses spanning 62 counties. In his new role, Judge Zayas will be responsible for the performance and efficiency of every trial court in the state, working collaboratively with the Chief Judge, Presiding Justices, Deputy Chief Administrative Judges, local administrative judges and trial court judges to support the work of the courts, ensure the most efficacious and effective assignment of judges and court personnel, and implement policies and standards governing practice and procedure.

“Judge Zayas has a stellar reputation for his keen judgment, hard work, integrity and deep knowledge of both the law and the complex workings of the New York State court system. He has demonstrated exceptional leadership and the highest ethical standards over the course of his distinguished judicial career. He is a forward-thinking, hands-on

manager as proven throughout his tenure as Administrative Judge for Criminal Matters in Queens County, where he implemented numerous reforms and programs to improve the delivery of justice. Judge Zayas brings an impressive breadth of expertise to this key post,” said Chief Judge Wilson. “I am grateful to him for accepting this vital position and am confident that, working together and carefully assessing the local needs of courts throughout our state, we will successfully navigate the many challenges facing our court system. Our paramount objective is to ensure that our courts provide just results to all in a timely manner, while simultaneously promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace and building stronger bridges between our courts and the communities we serve.”

“I am honored and excited for the opportunity to serve alongside Chief Judge Wilson in leading the New York State court system as we seek targeted, viable solutions to address the myriad issues that today confront our courts and justice system. I look forward—with the collective efforts of our talented, hardworking court administrators, judges and court personnel across the state, along with the support of our many justice partners—to effecting changes that will make the court system more efficient, accessible, equitable and transparent, serving to advance the delivery and quality of justice for all New Yorkers,” said Chief Administrative Judge Zayas.

Before his appointment as Chief Administrative Judge, Judge Zayas served as an Associate Justice on the Appellate Division, Second Department, to which he was named in May 2021. He began his judicial career in 2003, upon his appointment to New York City Criminal Court, Queens County, where he served as the presiding judge of the County’s misdemeanor treatment court and mental health recovery court. He was designated an acting Supreme Court Justice in 2010, appointed to the Court of Claims in 2012 and elected to State Supreme Court, Queens County, in 2016. During his tenure (from 2013 to 2021) as Administrative Judge of Queens County Supreme Court’s Criminal Term, Judge Zayas was responsible for overseeing the management and day-to-day operations of one of New York’s busiest criminal courts and presided over the County’s Youth Court. Prior to his ascension to the bench, he served as a principal law clerk to Hon. Rolando T. Acosta in New York City Civil Court, the Harlem Community Justice Center and State Supreme Court in Manhattan. He started his legal career as an attorney for The Legal Aid Society’s Criminal Appeals Bureau, Criminal Trial Division and Death Penalty Unit.

Judge Zayas has lectured extensively on a range of court- and law-related topics, from criminal motion practice to managing an administrative workload to building a diverse bench. He is a member of several judicial and bar associations, including the Latino Judges Association, on which he served as a board member and secretary. He is a graduate of Columbia University School of Law.

In tribute to Judge Amaker, Chief Judge Wilson added, “We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Judge Amaker for her tireless efforts as acting Chief Administrative Judge. She has done a remarkable job, graciously taking on the innumerable challenges of that key administrative post while also continuing to carry out her many responsibilities as Administrative Judge of the New York City Criminal Court.”

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