



NEWS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Joseph A. Zayas
Chief Administrative Judge**

**Contact:
Al Baker, Communications Director
Arlene Hackel
(212) 428-2500
www.nycourts.gov/press**

Date: December 15, 2023

Chief Judge Wilson Announces Two Appointments to The New York State Court System's Ethics Commission

NEW YORK—Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson today announced the appointment of Hon. Valerie Braithwaite Nelson, of the Appellate Division, Second Department, as Chair of the Unified Court System's Ethics Commission. Chief Judge Wilson also named Hon. Carmen R. Velasquez, of Queens County Supreme Court, Civil Term, as a member of the Commission. The Ethics Commission, in accordance with the Rules of the Chief Judge, is responsible for administering the distribution, collection, review, and maintenance of the financial disclosure statements filed by more than 5,000 state-paid judges, justices, nonjudicial officers, and nonjudicial employees of the New York State Unified Court System.

Justices Braithwaite Nelson and Velasquez have each been designated to five-year terms on the five-member advisory body, with Justice Braithwaite Nelson filling a vacancy left by Hon. Robert J. Miller, whose term as Commission Chair expired in November 2023. The appointments were made upon consultation with the Administrative Board of the Courts, comprising the Chief Judge and the Presiding Justice of each of the Appellate Division's four Judicial Departments.

"It gives me great pleasure to announce the appointments of two such experienced and esteemed members of the New York State bench to the court system's Ethics Commission, whose work is so crucial to preserving the integrity of—and fostering public trust and confidence in—our State's judiciary," said Chief Judge Wilson. "I look forward to Justice Braithwaite Nelson's leadership of the Commission, and to the valuable contributions that she and Justice Velasquez will make in carrying out the Commission's important mission."

“I would like to thank Chief Judge Wilson for appointing me as the Chair of the Ethics Commission of the New York State Unified Court System. I look forward to this opportunity to be of service to the Unified Court System. I am eager to work with the distinguished members of the Commission to fulfill the Commission’s important responsibilities,” said Justice Brathwaite Nelson.

“I am honored to have been appointed to the Unified Court System’s Ethics Commission. I look forward to working with the other members of the Commission to ensure the continued integrity of the Judiciary, and the thorough and efficient distribution, collection, review, and maintenance of the annual financial disclosure statements,” said Justice Velasquez.

Justice Brathwaite Nelson was elected to the New York City Civil Court in 2002 and elected to the State Supreme Court bench in 2004. In 2016, she made history as the first African-American female from Queens, New York to be designated to serve on the State Supreme Court’s Appellate Division, Second Department. In 2022, she was designed by Governor Kathy Hochul to serve on the Constitutional Bench of the Appellate Division, Second Department.

Justice Brathwaite Nelson earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Syracuse University and a Juris Doctor degree from George Washington University Law School. Prior to her ascension to the bench, she served in a variety of legal capacities in the private and public sectors, including as a law clerk to U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. Among her many professional activities, she serves as co-chair of the Queens County Bar Association’s Appellate Court Committee, as a committee member of the New York State Bar Association, and as a board member of Judicial Friends. She is a past member of the NYS Continuing Legal Education Board.

Justice Carmen R. Velasquez was elected to New York City Civil Court in November 2008, and to State Supreme Court in 2014, becoming the first Ecuadorian American elected to New York’s Supreme Court bench. Prior to taking the bench, she served as an Assistant District Attorney in Bronx County, worked as a deputy advocate for the New York City Sanitation Department’s Legal Affairs Division, and was a private practitioner, specializing in criminal defense, family law, and immigration.

Justice Velasquez emigrated from her native Ecuador at age 14. She attended John Jay College of Criminal Justice as a Belle Zeller Scholar and earned her Juris Doctor from Temple Law School, receiving the Counsel for Legal Education Opportunity Fellowship (CLEO) and the Temple University Graduate Fellowship. She is a past president of the Association of Supreme Court Justices of the State of New York, a past president and founding member of the Latino Lawyers of Queens County, and a former vice president of the Latino Judges Association. Justice Velasquez presently serves as president of the Queens Supreme Court Justices Association and as national treasurer for the National Association of Women Judges. She is the president-elect of the Association of Supreme Court Justices of the City of New York.

The appointments will take effect immediately.

#