



# **NEWS RELEASE**

**New York State  
Unified Court System**

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

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## **Chief Administrative Judge Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge St. George Announce Co-Chair Appointments to Surrogate's Court and Guardianship Advisory Committees**

**NEW YORK**—Working to promote best practices and improve the delivery of justice throughout New York's 62 counties, Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas and First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George today announced Judge Zayas' appointments to two preeminent committees that provide expert guidance to the Unified Court System's (UCS) leadership on the breadth of issues relating to key legal areas: Surrogate's Court matters, including wills, and trusts and estates, and guardianships.

Queens County Supreme Court Justice and former Surrogate Peter J. Kelly was named Co-chair of the Surrogate's Court Advisory Committee (SCAC), joining retired Surrogate Renee R. Roth, now Of Counsel at McLaughlin & Stern, in leading this important committee that advises the UCS leadership team on Estates, Powers and Trusts Law, the Surrogate's Court Procedure Act, and legal issues involving Surrogate's Court practice.

New York Court of Claims Judge and Acting Supreme Court Justice Charles M. Troia has been named Co-Chair of the Guardianship Advisory Committee (GAC), which recommends measures to ensure best practices in guardianship cases, including Mental Health Law Article 81 matters (in which the court appoints a guardian to manage the personal and/or financial affairs of an individual who is unable to do so due to mental or physical incapacity). Justice Troia joins Broome County Surrogate David Guy in helming the GAC.

"The complexity of the myriad legal and other issues examined by the GAC and SCAC cannot be overstated, with the work of these committees spurring reforms to enhance the administration of justice in critical matters involving the financial stability, health, well-being, and dignity of individuals and families across New York State and beyond," said Chief Administrative Judge Zayas.

"Justices Troia and Kelly are team-oriented leaders, well-versed in the multiple issues and areas of law relevant to the goals of their respective committees. I look forward to the progress ahead for the GAC and SCAC under their leadership," said First Deputy Administrative Judge St. George.

Justice Kelly's judicial career spans 27 years. He initially served in New York City Civil Court, was subsequently elected to Queens County Supreme Court and later to the County's Surrogate Court bench. In 2023, he was re-elected to the Queens County Supreme Court and, assisting the Queens County Surrogate Cassandra Johnson, serves as an Acting Surrogate in tandem with his duties as a State Supreme Court Justice. Before taking the bench, he held various non-judicial positions in the Court System, including as a principal law clerk in Queens County's Supreme Court and Surrogate's Court. He is a longstanding SCAC member, helping shepherd notable reforms, and has authored over 100 decisions that have been published by the New York Law Journal and New York Reporter.

"I am greatly honored to serve the SCAC in this new role, alongside Justice Roth, working collaboratively to provide advice and assistance to Judge Zayas, Judge St. George and the judicial leadership, including proposing legislative and other reforms, to help ensure that our Surrogate's Courts best address New Yorkers' varying justice needs," said Justice Kelly.

Justice Troia has presided over guardianship cases for nearly 12 years and serves as Chair of the Guardianship Roundtable of the Appellate Division's First and Second Departments and Co-Chair of the Second Department's Guardianship Task Force. He began his judicial career in 2010 in New York City Civil Court, then served on the New York City Criminal Court in Richmond County, and was subsequently designated an Acting Supreme Court Justice. In 2020, he was appointed by the Governor to the Court of Claims. Prior to becoming a judge, he served the UCS as a law clerk, first in Richmond County Supreme Court and later in Kings County Supreme Court and the Appellate Division's Second Department. He started out as an attorney in the New York City Law Department's Torts Division and was in private practice before joining the UCS.

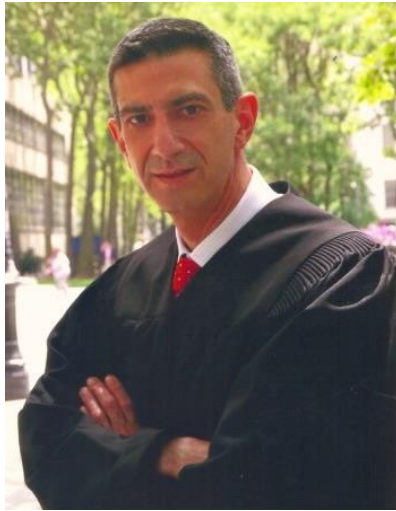
"I am thankful to Judge Zayas, Judge St. George and the UCS leadership for this opportunity and ready to join Surrogate David Guy in carrying out the GAC's important mission. As Co-Chair, I will be listening carefully to the full range of issues and perspectives under study as we work to more effectively, efficiently, and compassionately serve those who seek resolution through our courts," said Justice Troia.

Additionally, Judge Zayas and Judge St. George announced that New York County Supreme Court Justice Lisa A. Sokoloff, who presides over guardianship cases and launched an initiative to promote the diversity of attorneys eligible to accept guardianships, has been named a GAC member; and Albany County Surrogate's Court Judge Deborah S. Kearns, who served as the Court's Chief Clerk for the past decade, has been selected as a member of the SCAC.

The appointments take effect today.



Hon. Peter Kelly



Hon. Charles Troia



Hon. Lisa Sokoloff



Hon. Deborah Kearns

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