

Supreme Court: New Wisconsin judges bring varied backgrounds, experience to the bench

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Madison, Wisconsin (Aug. 4, 2020) – Wisconsin's newest circuit court judges bring varied backgrounds and experience to the bench, in addition to being accomplished lawyers in a number of areas of the law.

On Aug. 1, six newly elected circuit court judges took office in Chippewa, Dodge, Marinette, Milwaukee and Waukesha counties. They join a number of judges appointed by Gov. Tony Evers since the beginning of the year in Dane, Kenosha, Marathon, Milwaukee, Shawano-Menominee and Washington counties.

[Among the group:](#)

- A former state representative who served 10 years in the Wisconsin Legislature
- The former leader of an LGBTQ advocacy organization
- An adjunct law professor
- A former U.S. Army linguist in Spanish
- The former head of an advocacy group that serves people with disabilities
- A Judge Advocate General with active duty experience in the Wisconsin National Guard.

Each of the newly elected judges won competitive races on April 7. Incumbent judges in Brown and Florence-Forest counties also defeated challengers, and 24 other incumbent judges went uncontested in their re-election bids.

Evers appointed a new judge in Shawano-Menominee counties to fill a vacancy created when the only candidate whose name appeared on the ballot declared, before the election, that he would not take office.

Three incumbent Court of Appeals judges also started new terms Aug. 1: Chief Judge Lisa Neubauer, District II Court of Appeals, defeated challenger Paul Bugenhagen, Jr.; judges Joe Donald, District I, and Rachel A. Graham, District IV, were returned to office unchallenged in the Spring Election.

New circuit court judges are required to participate in a number of judicial education training programs to facilitate a smooth transition to the bench. They attended an orientation program July 29-31 in Madison, where fellow judges and attorney experts presented on Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM), family law, criminal law, civil law and jury trials, among other topics.

CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Programs) provided orientation in the use of CCAP applications and the judicial dashboard. This year's orientation also included a brief introduction to Zoom, the online meeting tool used to conduct court proceedings that have been restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

New judges also learned about the administrative side of the court system, including the Director of State Courts, Management Services, Court Operations and were introduced to resources available through the State Law Library.

New judges will also be expected to participate in a mentoring program and to attend the Wisconsin Judicial College this fall. Newly elected or appointed judges include:

Judge Larisa Benitez Morgan, Kenosha County Circuit Court

Judge Jack L. Davila, Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Judge Jacob Frost, Dane County Circuit Court

Judge Sandra Jo Giernoth, Washington County Circuit Court

Judge Mario White, Dane County Circuit Court

Judge Brett Blomme, Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Judge Rebecca Kiefer, Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Judge Benjamin Lane, Chippewa County Circuit Court

Judge Jack Melvin, Waukesha County Circuit Court

Judge Jane K. Sequin, Marinette County Circuit Court

Judge Kristine A. Snow, Dodge County Circuit Court

Judge Christine Taylor, Dane County Circuit Court

Judge Suzanne O'Neill, Marathon County Circuit Court

Kori Ashley, Milwaukee County Circuit Court (effective Sept. 13, 2020)

Katherine Sloma, Shawano County Circuit Court (effective Aug. 17, 2020)