THE JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court is the state's highest court; it also supervises and administers the state's judicial system. The state is divided into five judicial districts, with three justices elected from the first district (Cook County) and one justice elected from each of the other four districts. Justices are elected in partisan elections for ten years and may be retained in office for additional terms of ten years. A chief justice is elected by the other justices for a term of three years.

Charles E. Freeman

Justice Freeman received a Juris Doctor degree from The John Marshall Law School, Chicago. Early in his career he served as an Assistant Attorney General, Assistant State's Attorney, and an attorney for the Board of Election Commissioners. He served as a commissioner on the Illinois Commerce Commission from 1973 to 1976. He was in the private practice of law from 1962 to 1976. In 1976, he was elected a Circuit Judge in Cook County where he served for ten years. He was elected to the Appellate Court in 1986 and to the Illinois Supreme Court on November 6, 1990, as the first African-American to serve on the Court. On May 12, 1997, he was selected as Chief Justice and served in that capacity until January 1, 2000.

Thomas L. Kilbride

Justice Kilbride received his law degree from Antioch School of Law in Washington, D.C., in 1981. He practiced law for 20 years in Rock Island, engaging in the general practice of law, including appeals, environmental law, labor law, employment matters, and other general civil and criminal matters. He was admitted to practice in the United States District Court of Central Illinois and the United States Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Justice Kilbride was elected to the Supreme Court of Illinois for the Third District in 2000.

Robert R. Thomas

Justice Thomas was born on August 7,1952, in Rochester, NY. He received his B.A. degree in Government from the University of Notre Dame in 1974, and was named an Academic All-American in that same year. He received his J.D. degree from Loyola University School of Law in 1981. He was elected Circuit Court Judge in DuPage County in 1988. There, he presided over civil jury trials and was the Acting Chief Judge from 1989 to 1994. In 1994, Justice Thomas was elected to the Appellate Court Second District. On December 4, 2000, Justice Thomas was sworn in as the Illinois Supreme Court Justice for the Second District. In April 1996, Justice Thomas was inducted into the Academic All-American Hall of Fame, and in January 1999, he received the prestigious NCAA Silver Anniversary Award. Justice Thomas is a member of the DuPage County Bar Association. He was selected as Chief Justice during the 2005 September Term of the Supreme Court and served in that capacity until September 5, 2008.

Thomas R. Fitzgerald
Chief Justice

Chief Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald received his law degree from The John Marshall Law School, Chicago. He began his law career as a prosecutor in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. When first elected to the bench in 1976, he was the youngest Cook County judge. In 1989, he was elevated to presiding judge of Cook County's criminal courts and was appointed to serve as the presiding judge of Illinois' first statewide Grand Jury. Justice Fitzgerald was elected to the Supreme Court of Illinois for the First District in 2000. He was selected as Chief Justice during the 2008 May Term of the Supreme Court and began serving his term on September 6, 2008.

Justice Garman received a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Iowa College of Law in 1968. She was an Assistant State's Attorney in Vermilion County from 1969 to 1973. She then engaged in private practice with Sebat, Swanson, Banks, Lessen & Garman and was an Associate Judge for 12 years. Justice Garman was a Circuit Judge in the Fifth Judicial Circuit (1986-95) and Presiding Circuit Judge (1987-95). She was assigned to the Appellate Court, Fourth District, in July 1995, and was elected to the position in November 1996. Justice Garman was appointed to the Supreme Court on February 1, 2001 and subsequently elected to the Supreme Court on December 2, 2002.

Rita B. Garman

Justice Karmeier received his law degree from the University of Illinois. From 1964 through 1986, he engaged in private law practice, clerked for Illinois Supreme Court Justice Byron O. House and United States District Court Judge James L. Foreman, and served as Washington County State's Attorney. Justice Karmeier has served on the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Pattern Jury Instructions in Criminal Cases, presiding as Chair of the Committee from 2003 to 2004. He served as Resident Circuit Judge of Washington County from 1986 through 2004 when he was elected to the Supreme Court.

Lloyd A. Karmeier

Justice Burke was born on Feb. 3, 1944, in Chicago. She received her B.A. degree in education from DePaul University in 1976 and her J.D. degree from IIT/Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1983. She was admitted to the Federal Court, Northern District of Illinois, in 1983, the United States Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit in 1985, and certified for the Trial Bar, Federal District Court in 1987. In August 1995, she was appointed to the Appellate Court, First District. In 1996, she was elected to the Appellate Court, First District, for a full term. Justice Burke, the third woman to sit on the state's highest tribunal, was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court for the First District on July 6, 2006.

Anne M. Burke