

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SUPREME COURT APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR FOR
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

The Supreme Court of Illinois has announced the resignation of Joseph A. Schillaci as director of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts and appointed Cynthia Y. Cobbs to succeed him.

Mr. Schillaci, who has served in the Court's administration since 1991 and has been director since May 1997, is leaving the position to pursue private business interests.

Ms. Cobbs has been an attorney with the Administrative Office since 1997 and its chief legal counsel since 1999.

She becomes the first woman and the first African American to head the office in Illinois and is the fourth African American among 56 directors who head a court system in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and US territories, according to the National Center for State Courts. The others are: Massachusetts, South Carolina, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mr. Schillaci will stay on as director through the month of February and Ms. Cobbs' appointment as director will be effective March 1, 2002.

"I have said this before and I will say it now. I think Joe Schillaci is without a doubt the best court administrator in the country," Chief Justice Moses W. Harrison II said. "I have some basis for comparison because I've been in contact with many other state administrators through the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators that meet every year. Joe's in a class by himself.

"We selected Cynthia because she has been a very dedicated and hardworking employee. We think she has outstanding legal ability and we feel very fortunate to be able to attract someone of her caliber to court administration and particularly to our staff.

"She has outstanding ability and she is a proven factor in that she has been with the Administrative Office for some time and has taken on serious responsibilities. Additionally, she has been acting as administrator for the Illinois Courts Commission."

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Mr. Schillaci said the decision to leave the office, which serves as the administrative arm of the Supreme Court and which has a staff of more than 100, was not an easy one.

“Certainly, I have mixed emotions,” said Mr. Schillaci. “Serving as director and working with all of the Supreme Court justices was a fulfilling experience and one I can never forget. This was a very difficult decision for me to make.

“I just felt that there are other avenues I want to explore and that now is the proper time to do it.”

Ms. Cobbs came to the Administrative Office as an attorney in its executive division in 1997 and later was named chief legal counsel.

She was a judicial law clerk and later chief clerk to Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Freeman from 1989 to 1997. She received her law degree from IIT - Chicago Kent College of Law in 1988. She holds a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Maryland and worked for several years in Maryland in a clinical setting helping abused and neglected children. She earned her baccalaureate degree from Morgan State University in 1972.

“I am grateful and deeply honored that the Court has chosen me to serve as Administrative Director,” said Ms. Cobbs. “I have the highest regard for the members of our Supreme Court and I look forward to a fruitful and productive working relationship with each of them.

“I also owe a debt of gratitude to Joseph Schillaci for his constant support and direction. I wish him well in his future endeavors.”

Under the Illinois Constitution, the Supreme Court has supervisory authority over the entire state judiciary and the legal profession. The Constitution also authorizes the Supreme Court to appoint an administrative director and staff to assist the Chief Justice in fulfilling those administrative and supervisory duties.

Before being appointed Director of the Administrative Office in 1997, Mr. Schillaci had served as deputy director since January 1995 and executive assistant to the Supreme Court from 1991 through 1994.

He began his service to the Judicial Branch in 1986 as Administrator of the First District of the Illinois Appellate Court.