



Supreme Court of Illinois

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SUPREME COURT APPOINTS ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY TO FILL JUDICIAL VACANCY IN 10th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Thomas L. Kilbride announced Monday that longtime Peoria County Assistant State's Attorney Jodi M. Hoos has been appointed by the Supreme Court to fill a judicial vacancy for the Peoria County resident Circuit Judge in the 10th Judicial Circuit.

Justice Kilbride recommended Ms. Hoos' appointment to the Supreme Court after an extensive application, evaluation, and interview process that included the formation of a special judicial screening committee.

"This was a very difficult decision," Justice Kilbride said. "Peoria County is very fortunate to have several qualified attorneys that had sought the position. While I am confident that any one of our finalists would have made a great jurist, Ms. Hoos brings a very strong depth of trial experience to the bench."

While growing up in the plains of Nebraska, Ms. Hoos knew from the time she was a young girl that she wanted to be in a courtroom. When she was 12 years old, her father was killed in a car accident. At that time, she went to court with her family for a hearing as part of that tragic incident.

"It was almost like divine intervention," Ms. Hoos said. "From that time on, I knew I belonged in a courtroom. I knew I wanted to be in a courtroom and prosecute cases."

Since joining the state's attorney's office in 2000, Ms. Hoos has worked every courtroom in Peoria County. She has tried more than 125 jury trials and more than 40 murder cases. She also handled a variety of traffic, misdemeanor, juvenile, domestic, and felony cases.

Ms. Hoos has served as chief of the Criminal Division in the state's attorneys' office for the past seven years. In addition to prosecuting cases, she is responsible for the supervision, training, and mentoring of new assistant state's attorneys.

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One of Ms. Hoos' most recent murder trials involved Nathan Leuthold. He was convicted of killing his wife Denise in July. She tried the case with Peoria County State's Attorney Jerry Brady. It was the first trial in the 10th Judicial Circuit in which media cameras were allowed to record and televise the proceedings under the Supreme Court Policy for Extended Media Coverage.

"I am excited and happy for Jodi and most importantly for the community," Mr. Brady said. "As chief of the Criminal Division, Ms. Hoos litigates most of the serious felonies charged by our office. Unquestionably, she is always prepared, knows the applicable law, and seeks to administer justice to all.

"Her knowledge, intellect, personality and most importantly her dedication to justice and fairness will make her an excellent judge."

Ms. Hoos is a member of the Peoria County Bar Association and the National District Attorney's Association. She is also a past member of the Prosecutor's Bar Association.

Ms. Hoos graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Nebraska-Kearney with a bachelor of science degree in Political Science. She obtained her *juris doctor* from the University of Nebraska College of Law.

"I wish to thank the Supreme Court and Justice Kilbride for the confidence they have shown in me," Ms. Hoos said. "I am very humbled and honored by this appointment and I'm excited to be in a position where I can continue to serve the citizens of Peoria County."

Under the Illinois Constitution, the Supreme Court is given the authority to fill judicial vacancies. In making his recommendation, Justice Kilbride opened an application process for everyone interested in the appointment. Justice Kilbride also sought and received written comments about the candidates from the community. The evaluation process also included criminal and financial background checks by police authorities and a disciplinary background check by the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission.

The Illinois State Bar Association conducted a survey of all attorneys residing in the 10th Judicial Circuit. The attorneys were surveyed on their opinions of the applicants' integrity, temperament, legal ability, management skills and other professional qualifications.

Justice Kilbride also appointed a 20-person judicial screening committee made up of representatives from the community, including non-lawyers to evaluate all the applicants. The committee was chaired by Timothy Bertschy, a partner with the Peoria firm of Heyl, Royster, Voelker & Allen and former president of the Illinois State Bar Association.

"The committee reviewed the credentials of very qualified attorneys in making its individual recommendations to Justice Kilbride and interviewed three of the candidates in person," Mr. Bertschy said. "While any one of these candidates would have made a fine judge, Ms. Hoos' legal experience, intellect, and presence were impressive."

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In addition to Mr. Bertschy, the members of the committee were: Frank Abdnour, owner, The Spotted Cow; Dr. Rita Ali, vice president of Diversity, International & Adult Education, Illinois Central College; Jonathan Burklund, chairman and CEO, Burklund Distributors, Inc.; Tamara Butler, school social worker – PPS 150 and adjunct professor, Illinois Central College; Carole Gibbs, retired registered nurse; Timothy Howard, attorney, Howard & Howard and president-elect of the Peoria County Bar Association; Donald Jackson, attorney and sole practitioner; Dr. Kimberly Johnston, president of Methodist College; William Kohlhase, attorney, Miller, Hall & Triggs LLC; Chief Judge Stephen Kouri of the 10th Judicial Circuit; Janaki Nair, attorney, Elias, Meginnes & Seghetti, P.C.; John Nicoara, attorney, Nicoara & Steagall; Andrea Pendleton, retired administrative assistant, Richwoods Township; Laura Petersen, attorney and partner, Quinn, Johnston, Henderson, Pretorius & Cerulo; Deb Rochford, office manager, Jim Rochford & Associates; Jeffrey Rock, attorney and partner, Hasselberg, Rock, Bell & Kuppler LLP; Timothy Schmidgall, business manager, Laborer's Local No. 165; L. Lee Smith, attorney and partner-in-charge, Peoria office, Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP; and John Stenson, retired chief of police, City of Peoria.

Ms. Hoos will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Michael E. Brandt on December 12, 2014. Her appointment is effective on December 29, 2014 will terminate on December 5, 2016.

The 10th Judicial Circuit consists of Marshall, Peoria, Putnam, Stark and Tazewell counties.

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(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Joseph Tybor, director of communications to the Illinois Supreme Court, at 312.793.2323 or Dawn Frison Cook, senior communications specialist to the Illinois Supreme Court, at 312.793.0870)