



NEWS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

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

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New York State Courts' First Statewide Civic Engagement Coordinator Named

NEW YORK—In furthering the Unified Court System’s civic education and engagement efforts, Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas, First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Norman St. George, and Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives Edwina G. Richardson today announced the appointment of Zenith T. Taylor as the courts’ premier Statewide Civic Engagement Coordinator. In this newly created position, Ms. Taylor will lead the development and implementation of the court system’s civic engagement programs, promoting connections between the courts and the communities they serve by enhancing public understanding of the workings of New York’s state courts. As part of the New York State Courts’ Communications team and in close collaboration with the Office for Justice Initiatives, she will develop and support age-appropriate civic education programs for students, teachers, and the public; work with schools, community groups, and religious organizations to create materials to enhance understanding of the role of the courts, specific legal issues, and significant historical events; serve as a liaison with representatives from local courts to facilitate the court system’s educational outreach and access to justice programs and share best practices; and monitor and report on progress in civic participation and empowerment, among other duties.

“Recent studies point to an alarming lack of civic literacy among Americans. As Chief Judge, expanding the New York State Courts’ community outreach and civic education initiatives is among my top-most priorities,” said Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson, upon Ms. Taylor’s appointment. “That is why I am so pleased that Zenith Taylor has been named to fill this critically important new role within the court system. She is a talented attorney who, believing deeply in this mission, has worked with bar associations and other groups to create and deliver programs to educate the public about the workings of

the courts and legal system and help spur civic engagement. I am eager to work with her, along with the court system's leadership team, judges, non-judicial personnel, and justice partners, towards our goal of engaging and informing New Yorkers, particularly young people, in the work of the New York State Courts and our State government."

"I am delighted to announce the appointment of the New York State Courts' first Statewide Civic Engagement Coordinator, and to welcome Zenith Taylor to this crucial post. Ms. Taylor is an experienced attorney whose knowledge of the law and court system, combined with her leadership qualities and active participation in a wide variety of community outreach programs, will serve her well in meeting the multiple demands of this pivotal and challenging assignment. I have every confidence that she will be an asset to our local courts throughout the State, to the communities they serve, and to the court system's many justice partners, helping advance our access to justice and civic engagement efforts," said Chief Administrative Judge Zayas.

"With her expertise in program facilitation, community engagement, and advocacy, Zenith Taylor is up to the task in assuming this new statewide post. Over the past three decades, both as a private practitioner and more recently as a Unified Court System court attorney referee, Ms. Taylor has contributed to the development, planning, and implementation of a variety of community outreach and education programs. She fully understands the importance of such efforts, whether in promoting access to justice, building public trust in our justice system, or fostering civic pride and engagement among New York's youth. I look forward to our working together toward that end," said First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge St. George.

"The New York State Courts and the communities they serve will surely benefit from Zenith Taylor's multiple talents, long-term experience in the legal field, and active support of civic engagement programs—including initiatives aimed at residents of underrepresented and marginalized communities—in her challenging, new role," said Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Richardson. "An established leader in New York's legal community, Ms. Taylor is deeply committed to working with the court system's various constituencies to expand programs to promote understanding of the role and structure of the State's judicial branch, a key part of our efforts toward equal justice for all New Yorkers, regardless of income, background, or need."

"I am thrilled and honored to have been selected as the Statewide Civic Engagement Coordinator. It is truly exciting to have the chance to assist the court system in community outreach and the development of programs to demystify court procedures and promote civic education and engagement," said Ms. Taylor. "I appreciate this opportunity and extend my gratitude to Chief Judge Wilson, Chief Administrative Judge Zayas, First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge St. George, and Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Richardson for entrusting me with the role of the courts' first Statewide Civic Engagement Coordinator."

Since 2019, Ms. Taylor has served as a court attorney referee in Queens County Supreme Court's Civil Term, where she initially presided over kinship hearings and more recently adjudicated uncontested divorce matters and developed training programs, in addition to her other responsibilities. Prior to joining the court system—and

for over 25 years—she was a solo legal practitioner, specializing in divorce, family law, and trust and estate matters. She also represented indigent litigants as an 18B panel member, served as an Attorney for Children, and regularly provided pro bono legal services to clients in need in a variety of matters.

Zenith Taylor is a graduate of Howard University School of Law. Among her numerous professional activities, she is President-Elect of the Queens County Bar Association, immediate past president of the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Queens County, and past president of the Queens County Women’s Bar Association. Ms. Taylor has presented continuing legal education seminars at the New York State Judicial Institute. She is the recipient of multiple honors, including the Pro Bono Award from both the Queens County and Nassau County Volunteer Lawyers Projects; and the Metropolitan Black Bar Association’s Bar Leader of the Year Award.

Her appointment is effective May 9, 2024.

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