

Governor Announces Nominations to Superior Court and Family Court

*Nominating Judge Eric Davis and Chief Deputy Attorney General
Charlie Butler to Superior Court;
Chief Prosecutor for Sussex County Paula Ryan to Family Court*

✘ WILMINGTON – Governor Jack Markell announced Monday his nominations of three dedicated public servants to fill vacancies on the Superior Court in New Castle County and the Family Court in Sussex County.

Markell announced he will nominate Judge Eric M. Davis, currently of the Court of Common Pleas, and Chief Deputy Attorney General Charles E. Butler to fill two vacancies on the Superior Court. He will nominate Deputy Attorney General Paula T. Ryan, who currently serves as the Chief Prosecutor for Sussex County, to fill the vacancy on Family Court.

“These are three outstanding public servants,” said Markell. “We are lucky they are willing to serve our state in this important way. Judge Davis has contributed on the bench of the Court of Common Pleas for almost three years, and he has already made an impact in the court’s heavy criminal caseload and helped to expedite the important civil matters it handles. Charlie Butler has handled hundreds of matters in the Superior Court as a prosecutor, defense attorney, and civil litigator. We are fortunate that someone with his experience is willing to serve. Paula Ryan is an outstanding lawyer who has distinguished herself in difficult cases, including some of the most troubling trials in our state’s history. Her commitment to serving her community is unparalleled and she will be a strong addition to our Family Court if confirmed.”

“I feel privileged to be nominated today by the Governor,”

said Butler. "I have worked in Superior Court for twenty-five years, and I know how important the Court is to our State, our citizens, and, most importantly, to the cause of justice. If I am confirmed, I promise to work my hardest to contribute to that cause what I can."

Butler is a graduate of Salesianum High School, the University of Delaware, and Catholic University Law School. He practiced law in Philadelphia at Schnader, Harrison, Segal & Lewis and the District Attorney's Office before returning to Delaware in 1985 to become a Deputy Attorney General with the Delaware Department of Justice. Butler was the Democratic candidate for Attorney General in 1994. Thereafter, he practiced with Smith, Katzenstein & Furlow of Wilmington, the Davidson Law Firm of Scottsdale, Arizona, and as a solo practitioner in Wilmington before rejoining the Attorney General's office in 2010 as the top aide to Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III.

"I have really enjoyed my service on the Court of Common Pleas," said Davis. "As a judge on the Court, I have been afforded the opportunity to help Delawareans with important matters every day. Recently, we worked to speed up the civil trials handled by the Court so that we can resolve these disputes more quickly and efficiently. I look forward to contributing in the same way on Superior Court if I am confirmed."

Davis received his undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia and his law degree from Emory University. Davis practiced law with Miles & Stockbridge of Baltimore before joining Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in 1996. At Skadden, Davis's practice involved corporate governance issues and disputes arising from bankruptcy and corporate reorganizations. In 2010, Davis was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas by Governor Markell. On the Court of Common Pleas, he worked to create the Special Election Expedited Docket, also known as "SPEED," so that litigants would be guaranteed specific judge assignment and resolution within 5

months of a defendant's response to the claims. In February, he was appointed by Chief Judge Smalls to oversee the civil proceedings in New Castle County.

"Being nominated to the Family Court is an honor," said Ryan. "My career as a prosecutor has been devoted to protecting the vulnerable, and I really see service on the Family Court as an opportunity to continue and extend that."

Ryan is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and the Georgetown University Law Center. She began her career with Duane, Morris & Heckscher before moving to Sussex County in 1995 to serve as a law clerk to Justice Randy J. Holland of the Supreme Court. After her clerkship, she joined the Department of Justice and handled matters in Family Court, the Court of Common Pleas, and Superior Court. In 2007, she was appointed Chief Prosecutor of Sussex County. In that capacity, she supervises approximately twenty deputy attorneys general and she has personally handled difficult matters such as the recent prosecutions of Earl Bradley and Derrick Powell.

All three nominations are expected to be considered at a special session of the State Senate that has not yet been scheduled.

The special session will also include the nomination of Vice Chancellor John Noble, who will be nominated by the Governor for reappointment to the Court of Chancery.

The two vacancies on the Superior Court were prompted by the retirement of the Hon. Peggy Ableman and the Hon. Joseph R. Slights III. The vacancy on the Family Court was caused by the removal of the Hon. John E. Henriksen.

The Governor has not yet nominated candidates for the two new positions on the Superior Court created by the 146th General Assembly. Nominations for those positions will not be handled during the special session.