



Supreme Court of Illinois

January 12, 2021

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPOINTS CARLA BARNES AS AT-LARGE JUDGE IN ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Justice Rita B. Garman and the Supreme Court of Illinois have announced the appointment of Carla E. Barnes as an At-Large Circuit Court Judge in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. Ms. Barnes will be the first African-American judge in the Eleventh Circuit.

Ms. Barnes is being appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Scott D. Drazewski on December 31, 2020. The appointment takes effect on February 11, 2021, and will conclude on December 5, 2022, when the vacancy will be filled by the winner of the November 2022 general election.

“The screening committee found Carla Barnes to be extremely well-qualified for the position of circuit judge in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, and I am pleased that the Court unanimously agreed with that assessment,” Justice Garman said. “She has served the people of McLean County in the Public Defender’s Office for 19 years and has been the Chief Public Defender since 2014. Considering her diverse background and her experience in the courtroom, I am confident that she will be an excellent member of the judiciary.”

Ms. Barnes has served as the McLean County Chief Public Defender since 2014 where she was the first African-American to hold that position and the first African-American administrator in McLean County. She had started with the McLean County Public Defender’s Office in 2001 as an Assistant Public Defender. Before joining the Public Defender’s Office, Ms. Barnes served as an Assistant State’s Attorney in the Cook County and McLean County States Attorney’s Offices.

“I am honored and humbled to have been chosen for this position. I have been with the Public Defender’s Office for 19 years and serving the indigent clients of McLean County has been a highlight of my career,” Barnes said. “I was appointed as Chief Public Defender six years ago and I enjoyed serving clients in that capacity. Now another opportunity has presented itself and I will do my best to serve the residents of the 11th Judicial Circuit.”

Ms. Barnes was appointed by former Gov. Bruce Rauner to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority as a Member in 2017 and was reappointed by Gov. J.B. Pritzker in 2020. She is a board member of the Juvenile Justice Council and is an active member of the McLean County Veterans Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit as well as the McLean County Drug Court.

Ms. Barnes earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Illinois State University and her *Juris Doctorate* from the UIC John Marshall Law School.

The Eleventh Judicial Circuit includes Ford, Livingston, Logan, McLean, and Woodford Counties.

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