

Circuit Judge Melissa Morgan Re-Elected to Second Term as Chief Judge

Circuit Judge Melissa A. Morgan has been re-elected Chief Judge of the Second Judicial Circuit of Illinois for a second consecutive two-year term that began January 1, 2024. Judge Morgan was re-elected to the position by her fellow Circuit Judges.

The position of Chief Judge is called for by Article VI of the Constitution of the State of Illinois and subject to the authority of the Illinois Supreme Court, the Chief Judge has general administrative authority over the judicial circuit. Duties of the Chief Judge include assignment of judges and court reporters to particular counties, dissemination of information to judges and officers of the court, administration of the circuit's Court Services/Probation Department, and interaction with the Circuit Clerks of each county.

The Second Judicial Circuit encompasses the 12 Southern Illinois counties of Crawford, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Wayne and White. The Circuit is served by fifteen Circuit Judges, 12 of whom are elected by their resident counties and 3 of whom are elected circuit-wide. The Circuit is also served by an additional six appointed Associate Judges.

Judge Morgan has served as a Circuit Judge since 2006 when she was elected circuit-wide to succeed the Honorable George W. Timberlake upon his retirement in December of 2006. At that time, Judge Morgan became the first female elected as a circuit-wide judge for the Second Judicial Circuit. When Judge Morgan was first elected to the position of Chief Judge by her colleagues, she also became the first female ever elected Chief Judge for the Second Circuit.

During her first term as Chief Judge, Judge Morgan initiated a program known as "Lawyer in the Library" with grant funding secured from the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. The program consists of a local attorney meeting one-on-one with individuals and providing them with free legal coaching, document review, e-filing, and referrals regarding civil issues. Only in its second year, this program is now offered in four counties in the Circuit: Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, and Richland. Judge Morgan has also worked with the Administrative Office to secure funding for technology advancements including "For the Record" electronic recording in virtual courtrooms throughout the Circuit. Per Supreme Court Rule 42, she also serves on the Conference of Chief Circuit Judges working alongside other Chief Judges from across the state.

The Chief Judge's Office is currently located at the Jefferson County Justice Center in Mt. Vernon. Persons may contact the Chief Judge by writing to 911 Casey Avenue, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864 or by calling (618) 244-8036.

