

FROM THE DESK OF: CHIEF JUDGE JORGE L. ORTIZ

I began my term as Chief Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit on January 4, 2016. I am very proud to have been elected by my fellow circuit judges to serve as chief judge. I consider it a great honor, and I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of my many fine predecessors. In particular, I would like to thank my immediate predecessor, Judge John Phillips for his leadership as Chief Judge and his outstanding service to the entire Lake County community. Judge Phillips has been a true innovator. Among his many accomplishments was to establish three specialty courts to better serve some of Lake County's most vulnerable citizens. When I think of our court-involved veterans, the mentally ill and those struggling with addiction, it is fair to say that justice for them has been improved immeasurably because of Judge Phillips' vision, dedication and passion. Thank you, Chief, for a job well done!

The change in court administration also means that there will be a new deputy chief judge as well as new presiding judges in our trial divisions. Judge Jay Ukena will assist me as the new deputy chief judge. Judge Daniel Shanes is taking over as presiding judge of the Felony Division. Judge Mark Levitt will serve as presiding judge of the Misdemeanor/Traffic Division. Judge Thomas Schippers will succeed me as the presiding judge of the Civil Division while also assuming my former law division caseload. Judge Diane Winter will be presiding judge of the Family Division while retaining her law division call. Judge Valerie Ceckowski will be the supervising judge at juvenile court which will continue under the umbrella of the Family Division. I look forward to closely working with these colleagues during my term to assure that the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit continues to serve all the citizens of Lake County at the highest level. I would like to thank our outgoing presiding judges, George Bridges, Margaret Mullen, Victoria Rossetti and Donna Jo Vorderstrasse for their leadership and service in the criminal and family divisions. I am fortunate to be able to call on them for advice and to draw upon their experience and wisdom.

These are exciting times for our community and our courts. Construction of the Criminal Court Tower continues. We also broke ground recently on an addition to the Depke Juvenile Justice Complex. We look forward to implementing technology upgrades in our court while also continuing initiatives to improve access to justice.

I would like to thank the County Board, elected officials, members of the Lake County Bar Association, all of our court partners and staff for their continued cooperation and support. I ask that we all continue to work together to serve the people of Lake County, for it is by working together that we, as a community, best serve the ends of justice. Together we will work to ensure that the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit is a place where justice is served with confidence and integrity, and that Lake County continues to be a great place to live, work and raise our families

Please feel free to explore the Report of the Judiciary to learn more about what is happening in the 19th Judicial Circuit.