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FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit of Illinois
18 N. County Street
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Date of Release: July 2, 2024
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LAKE COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER RETIRES AFTER 37 YEARS OF SERVICE

“Today, we celebrate the remarkable career of a truly exceptional individual, the retirement of head public defender Joy Gossman. She is the first female and the longest-serving public defender in the history of Lake County. It is an honor to acknowledge the contributions Joy has made to our legal community and the justice system as the Lake County Public Defender,” said Deputy Chief Judge Patricia S. Fix on behalf of herself and Chief Judge Daniel B. Shanes.

Joy Gossman began her career as an intern with the Lake County Public Defender’s Office in 1987. Since 1989, she has served in every division of the Office. In 1997, she was promoted to Deputy Chief Public Defender, and in 2007, she was appointed Chief Public Defender, serving in that role for 17 years.

Deputy Chief Judge Fix stated, “Over the years, Joy has shown an unwavering commitment to justice, ensuring that the most vulnerable among us receive the defense they deserve. Her dedication is a testament to her character and a source of inspiration for all of us. Through countless cases, she has demonstrated a deep sense of empathy, a sharp legal mind, and an unyielding dedication to upholding the principles of fairness and equality.”

“Working with Joy for the past 37 years has been my privilege. We have worked collaboratively, whether adversarial or with her as Public Defender and me as Judge. It has been a pleasure; she has been an activist. The system would have failed without her vision and ability to collaborate with the courts and all our justice partners. Thank you, Joy, for your leadership and service. You have the admiration of your colleagues and all of us at the 19th Judicial Circuit. You have served on the frontlines; you have served justice, ensuring the indigent accused have their rights protected. That is your legacy,” said Circuit Judge Victoria A. Rossetti.

“After 37 years of defending the indigent accused and the last 17 years serving as the Public Defender, I decided it was time to retire. I am thankful for the opportunity that the Circuit Judges of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit gave me; instilling confidence needed to lead the Lake County Public Defender’s Office. Their appointment allowed me to expand the Office, increase the number of attorneys on staff, add social workers, and hire an immigration analyst, investigators, and support staff. Thank you to my mentors throughout my career; the guidance has been invaluable. I could not have imagined spending my entire legal career serving as a public defender. However, I knew after my first day in the Office as an intern through today that I was doing what I was always meant to do,” said Lake County Public Defender Joy Gossman.

Under the law, the Circuit Judges of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit select the Lake County Public Defender. That individual then independently manages the Public Defender's Office. As the search for a new Public Defender begins, an interim Public Defender will be named to fulfill the role until a permanent placement is announced.

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