

News Release



Summit County Court of Common Pleas



Judge Alison McCarty



Judge Kani H. Hightower

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Alison McCarty Named as the 2025 Administrative Judge & Judge Kani Harvey Hightower Elected as 2025 Presiding Judge

Summit County, Ohio: Judge Alison McCarty has once again been named as the General Division's Administrative Judge and Domestic Relations Judge Kani Harvey Hightower was elected as Common Pleas Presiding Judge.

The Administrative Judge is responsible for the administration, docket, and calendar of the General Division. Judge McCarty states that she is honored to serve the Court and our community again in this important role, and pledges to work together with her colleagues to address the challenges facing the court with its busy caseload. "Serving in this role is a challenge, but I am ready to work hard to administer the dockets fairly and support our judges and employees in order to effectively serve the public." said McCarty.

As the longest-serving judge currently on the General Division bench, Judge McCarty brings over 35 years of experience to the position, having been elected in November 2008 to the Common Pleas Court. She has previously served as an Akron Municipal Judge and assistant Summit County prosecutor. In addition to Administrative Judge and her full docket duties, Judge McCarty also presides over a Reentry Court Specialty Docket. The objective of Reentry Court is to provide strict monitoring and accountability for recently released offenders, while helping them transition to a safe and productive

lifestyle. The program is a minimum of 12 months long, and is designed to reduce recidivism and promote public safety.

Judge McCarty has been married to Thomas McCarty for over 35 years and they have two daughters, Grace and Eve.

The Presiding Judge addresses any administrative issues common to all divisions of the Common Pleas Court and oversees the Jury and Grand Jury proceedings for the General Division. Judge Hightower hopes to continue with some of these efforts and to help make the courts more accessible and easier to navigate. As Presiding Judge, she also hopes to further educate the public about the importance of jury service and to continue the Court's efforts in ensuring that the jury pool is representative of the population.

"It is my honor to serve as Presiding Judge. Due process, access to justice, and overall equity in our court system is tantamount for me. I look forward to ensuring these principles exist in our jury system and within our County court system." said Hightower.

Judge Hightower was elected to a full six-year term on the Summit County Domestic Relations Court in November 2022. Prior to this, Judge Hightower was an Akron Municipal Court magistrate for three years and a trial attorney for over fourteen years, practicing in all divisions of Common Pleas and before many of the current judges.

"I am thankful for the trust that my fellow judges have in my ability to fulfill this role." said Hightower.

Judge Hightower currently serves as an Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Akron School of Law. She has dedicated her career to improving the community through public service and advocacy. Since taking the bench, Judge Hightower has worked diligently to reduce the secondary trauma families sometimes experience during the adjudication process in domestic court.

Judge Hightower's desire to make the justice system more accessible and equitable motivated her to create the "Justice Initiatives Collaborative." This initiative is comprised of community officials and office holders who collaborate in an effort to increase access to justice, to reduce trauma, to provide legal representation in *pro se* divorces and evictions, to ensure suitable and adequate parking, and to increase signage and ADA accessibility.

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