

Speaker Biographies
NAPCO Webinar • Thursday, September 30, 2021; 3 PM (EDT)
COVID Court Leadership Fatigue
Dealing with the Delta Variant

Hon. Sheila A. Venable

... is the Assignment Judge for the Superior Court of New Jersey in Essex Vicinage (Newark), home to the state's largest general jurisdiction trial court. The Assignment Judge position is similar to a chief or presiding judge in other states. Judge Venable is responsible for all trial courts within the vicinage, including municipal courts which are funded separately by city governments. Newark is headquarters for the Essex Vicinage (a French term meaning district or vicinity used in New Jersey to designate single or multi-county districts administered by an Assignment Judge). There are 15 vicinages and 21 counties in New Jersey. Essex is a single county district. The Superior Court consists of 60 judges and 800 support staff handling more than 100,000 filings per year. The county's 22 municipal courts conducted their work through 38 judges and have annual filings in excess of 900,000 cases.

Judge Venable was initially appointed to the bench of the Superior Court in Hudson Vicinage in 2005. She sat in the Family and Criminal Divisions and eventually was designated Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division which she oversaw for ten years.

In 2021, she was reassigned and designated as Assignment Judge in Essex Vicinage by Chief Justice Stuart Rabner. Judge Venable is the first African-American woman to be named Assignment Judge in Essex.

Prior to appointment to the Superior Court bench, Judge Venable held various public lawyer and judicial positions. She served as counsel on behalf of the New Jersey State Public Defender at the Department of the Public Advocate, a public defender for the City of Jersey City, an Assistant Prosecutor from 1988 – 1991 in Jersey City, the first woman to become Chief Municipal Prosecutor for Jersey City, and later was appointed as Municipal Court Judge for the City of Jersey City.

Judge Venable earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with an emphasis in Public Administration from California State University, Northridge, and her J.D. degree from the University of Santa Clara. During her career, she has received various proclamations and citations from local and state governments. She is a lifetime member of the NAACP and has been recognized in numerous ways for her community service. Her most important roles, however, have been as a wife, mother and grandmother.

Amy K. DePaul

... is the Trial Court Administrator for the Superior Court of New Jersey in Essex Vicinage (Newark). She was appointed to that position in 2013. As the highest-ranking staff executive in the vicinage, she worked with former Assignment Judges Patricia Costello and Sallyanne Floria, and now partners closely with the current Assignment Judge, the Hon. Sheila Venable, in overseeing the operations of all trial courts within the vicinage. In doing so, DePaul manages the day-to-day nonjudicial work of the court through a highly skilled management team.

Prior to her current position, DePaul served the justice system in Essex Vicinage in various roles, including Superior Court Family Division Manager (2011 – 2013), Director of the Newark

Municipal Court (2009 – 2011), and Assistant Civil Division Manager (2006 – 2009). She has also worked in private practice as an associate with the law firm *Chasan, Leyner & Lamparello*.

Ms. DePaul holds a Bachelor Degree in Psychology from Villanova University, and a J.D. Degree from Seton Hall University School of Law. Upon graduation from law school, she served as Law Clerk to the Hon. Patricia Costello, Presiding Judge, Family Division in Essex Vicinage. As a lawyer, she is a member of the New Jersey State Bar as well as the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey.

Hon. Stanley Whitaker

... is the Chief Judge of the Second Judicial District Court of New Mexico (Albuquerque). He was elected by his colleagues in 2018 to serve in that capacity and began as the court's top judicial officer in January 2019. He will finish a three-year term as Chief Judge at the end of 2021. The court serves Bernalillo County, the state's most populous county.

Judge Whitaker was appointed to the District Court in 2006. Prior to his appointment, he worked as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Firearms / Violent Crimes Division in New Mexico (2002 – 2006); served as a Domestic Violence Special Commissioner in the Second Judicial District Court (1996 – 2002); and as an Assistant District Attorney with the Bernalillo County District Attorney's Office where he prosecuted felony child abuse cases (1993 – 1996).

He currently serves as an active member of the New Mexico Judicial Council and Budget Committee, and as a member of the New Mexico Civil Rights Commission having been appointed by Governor Lujan Grisham. In 2019, he received the Justice Pamela B. Minzer Professionalism Award which recognizes attorneys or judges who, over long and distinguished legal careers, have by their ethical and personal conduct exemplified the epitome of professionalism. (The late Justice Minzer was New Mexico's first female Chief Justice).

Judge Whitaker graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Education from the University of Kansas and obtained his law degree in 1989 from the University of New Mexico Law School.

Katina Watson

... is the Court Executive Officer / Clerk for the Second Judicial District Court of New Mexico (Albuquerque). She has been in her position since January 2021 and is responsible for the non-judicial support staff of the court. The divisions consist of civil, criminal, domestic relations, children's court, and all the programs and support services of the Court. The administrative functions include: maintaining and securing all records, dockets and evidence; scheduling cases; providing direct courtroom support; supervising court non-judicial personnel; managing juror services; ensuring division compliance with statutory rules; providing technical assistance and managerial support to diverse court committees; and rendering information and organizational assistance to the Chief Judge. Also included is the preparation and monitoring of the Court's budget and liaison between the Court and various agencies.

Prior to her current position, Ms. Watson served nine years as the Court Executive Officer for the Twelfth Judicial District, a two-county district in the south-central portion of the State. Alamogordo is the most populous city within the District.

Over Ms. Watson's tenure with the New Mexico Court system, she has served on various committees including Budget, Personnel Rules, Classification and Compensation, Performance Measures, Workforce Investment, and Judicial and Staff Workload Studies. In 2018, she led the pilot of the statewide consolidation of New Mexico District and Magistrate Courts.

Watson holds a Bachelor Degree in Communications and a Graduate Certificate in Judicial Administration from Michigan State University.

Deborah Taylor Tate

... currently serves as the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts for the Tennessee Supreme Court and State of Tennessee and a member of the American Judges Association and the Conference of State Court Administrators, where she was recently elected to the national board of directors by her peers. For the past three years, Tate has served as Co-chair of the National Judicial Opioid Task Force, developing and implementing training and resources regarding the opioid epidemic to thousands of judges across the nation.

Ms. Tate, a licensed attorney, also serves as the Supreme Court's appointee to numerous state boards and commissions, including the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System Board overseeing the state's \$60 billion pension fund, where she also was elected to the Audit Committee. Tate serves on the Tennessee Information Systems Council, which oversees all technology projects for the State of Tennessee.

Nationally, she serves as vice-chairman of the national Multicultural Media, Telecommunications and Internet Council. She was twice-nominated to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) by President George W. Bush and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2005. She served as the only female Commissioner of the FCC until 2009, serving as chair of two Federal Joint Boards regarding advanced communications services and represented the FCC internationally at the International Telecommunications Union and in bilateral telecommunications negotiations. She was named the first ITU Envoy for her work with children's internet policy as well as receiving the honor of Laureate for Childhood Online Protection.

At the time of her presidential appointment, Ms. Tate was serving as the chairman and director of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, the state regulatory body for all telecom and utility companies and previously served as executive director of the Health Facilities Commission overseeing the state's healthcare facility and services regulation. Tate served on the legal counsel and senior staff for former Senator Lamar Alexander, and former Governor Don Sundquist.

She presently serves as vice-chair of the National Policy Committee for Centerstone Research Institute, the leading informatics, analytics, and clinical research provider for behavioral healthcare. Ms. Tate received both her undergraduate degree and Juris Doctorate (J.D.) from the University of Tennessee, and also attended Vanderbilt Law School.

Gordon Griller

... is the Executive Director of the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers (NAPCO), a nonprofit, public benefit corporation composed of state and local trial court leadership judges and court executives. He also works part-time with the National Center for State Courts' Court Consulting Services group, having retired in January 2020 as a Principal Court Management Consultant after 14 years of full-time service with the Center. His consulting engagements are wide-ranging, including caseflow management, operations, reengineering, court facility studies, strategic planning, efficiency analyses, systems and procedures, organizational development, as well as leadership programs for presiding judges, chief administrative officers, and program professionals in general, limited, and specialized courts.

Prior to his work with the Center, Mr. Griller held numerous private and public positions dedicated to trial court improvement and reform, including Vice President of Justice Practices for the State and Local Solutions Group at Affiliated Computer Systems (ACS), a division of the Xerox Corporation; the first Administrator of Trial Courts for the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County (Greater Phoenix); Court Administrator for the Superior Court in Maricopa County; the first Judicial District Administrator of the Second Judicial District of Minnesota in Ramsey County (Greater St. Paul); and Court Administrator of the Municipal Court of Hennepin County, Minnesota (Greater Minneapolis) prior to the unification of Minnesota's state and local trial courts.

Additionally, Mr. Griller has served as President of the National Association of Trial Court Administrators where he co-chaired the Special Commission in the 1980s that created the National Association for Court Management (NACM), the largest professional association in the world dedicated to the improvement of trial court administration. He is a recipient of the National Center's *Warren E. Burger Award* for outstanding contributions to court administration, the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts' *Tom C. Clark Award*, NACM's *Award of Merit*, the Institute for Court Management's *Star Award*, and the Justice System Management Institute's *Ernest C. Friesen Award* for vision, leadership, and sustained commitment to excellence in the administration of justice.

Griller holds a B.A. Degree in Political Science from the University of Minnesota, and a M.A. Degree in Public Administration from the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis).