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Judges Linda G. Baxter, Thomas N. Lyons and Carmen Messano Named to Appellate Division

Yesterday, outgoing Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz signed orders naming Superior Court Judges Linda G. Baxter, Thomas N. Lyons and Carmen Messano to the Appellate Division, effective Nov. 20.

Judge Edwin H. Stern, presiding judge for administration of the Appellate Division, welcomed the newest members to the appellate bench. "These are three highly qualified, highly capable judges and we look forward to working with them," he said.

Born on March 1, 1949, Judge Baxter holds a B.A. from Connecticut College in New London, and a J.D. from Rutgers Law School-Camden. She began her legal career working for Camden Regional Legal Services, Inc, where she worked from 1974-1977. She then joined the Department of the Public Advocate, Division of Mental Health Advocacy. In 1989 she was appointed county counsel for Camden County, leaving that post in 1991 to enter private practice.

Named to the bench by Gov. James J. Florio, Judge Baxter was assigned to the Civil Division in Camden Vicinage on Oct. 18, 1991. She moved to the Family Division on Jan. 1, 1992, and returned to the Civil Division on Sept. 1, 1993. On Sept. 1, 1995, Judge Baxter began an assignment in the Criminal Division, and was appointed presiding judge on Nov. 1, 1995. She remained in that position until her appointment to the Appellate Division. Judge Baxter and her husband, Robert Baxter, reside in Haddonfield. She has two children.

Judge Lyons was born on March 12, 1949. He holds an B.A. from Holy Cross College in Worcester, Mass. and a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center. In addition, he is a graduate of the National School of Finance at Fairfield University. He served as law secretary to the Honorable Cuddie E. Davidson Jr. of the Superior Court of New Jersey before entering private practice. He was a partner with Gibbons, Del Deo, Dolan, Griffinger, & Vecchione at the time of his appointment.

Appointed to the bench in 1994 by Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, Judge Lyons began his Judiciary career in the Family Division in Union Vicinage on Sept. 3, 1998. He moved to the Civil Division on Sept. 1, 2001, and to the Criminal Division on Sept. 1, 2004. He was named presiding judge of the General Equity Part two months later, and remained on the bench in the General Equity Part until his elevation to the Appellate Division. A resident of Mountainside, Judge Lyons and his wife, Gemma, have two children.

Judge Messano was born on May 23, 1953. He received a B.A. from Lafayette College and a J.D. from Boston College Law School. He began his legal career in the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, where he worked from 1977 to 1982. He worked in private practice until 1991, when he was named Hudson County prosecutor, a role he filled until his appointment to the bench in 1997 by Gov. Christine Todd Whitman.

Judge Messano joined the Civil Division in Hudson Vicinage on Aug. 11, 1997. He then served in the Family Division

from Sept. 1, 1999 to Aug. 31, 2001, and in the Criminal Division from Sept. 1, 2001 to Aug. 31, 2002. He returned to the Civil Division on Sept. 1, 2002 and was named presiding judge of that division on Sept. 1, 2004. He remained in that position until his elevation to the Appellate Division. Judge Messano and his wife, Maria Maio, live in Jersey City.

The Appellate Division of Superior Court is the state's intermediate appellate court. Appellate Division judges are named by the chief justice from among the judges of the Superior Court. The 35 appellate judges are assigned to one of eight parts; each case is heard by a two- or three-judge panel formed by members of one part.

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