

News Release



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STUART RABNER

Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court

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Judge Thomas W. Sumners Jr. Designated as Chief Judge of Appellate Division

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner today designated Superior Court Judge Thomas W. Sumners Jr. as the chief judge of the Appellate Division, effective May 23.

Judge Sumners succeeds Chief Judge Carmen Messano, who retires after more than 25 years on the bench, including 10 years as the chief judge. Appellate Judge Heidi W. Carrier has been designated the acting deputy presiding judge for administration for the Appellate Division.

“Judge Messano is one of the giants of the Judiciary, and the Appellate Division has benefited greatly from his steady leadership and wise counsel,” Chief Justice Rabner said. “We also are fortunate to have a strong bench with Judges Sumners and Carrier, and I am confident they will continue the tradition of excellence for which the Appellate Division is widely known.”

The chief judge of the Appellate Division works closely with the Appellate Division Clerk’s Office to manage the work of the division. Judge Messano was named presiding judge for administration on June 26, 2013. The title was changed to chief judge last year. He has been assisted by Judge Sumners, who served as the division’s acting deputy presiding judge for administration while Judge Jack Sabatino has been assigned temporarily to the Supreme Court.

“It has been a privilege and honor to serve as a Superior Court judge for more than 25 years, and, in particular, to have served as chief judge of the Appellate Division for more than a decade,” Judge Messano said. “I thank Chief Justice Rabner for the trust he placed in me, and Administrative Director Glenn Grant for his stewardship of the finest judiciary in the country. I also thank my colleagues on the Appellate Division, whose intellect, integrity, and dedication taught me something new all the time, even though I have been a member of the bar for 46 years.”

Judge Sumners was nominated by Gov. Jon Corzine and joined the bench in May 2008. He was assigned to the civil division in the Mercer Vicinage, a position he held for three years until being transferred to the criminal division. He moved to the Appellate Division in 2014.

Judge Sumners received his bachelor's degree from Lafayette College and earned his law degree from Rutgers Law School – Newark.

“I would like to thank Chief Justice Rabner for having the confidence in me to appoint me to this position. Outstanding individuals have served in this position in the past, including Judge Carmen Messano, and they have led our court in becoming among the most respected appellate courts in the country. I look forward to working with our court's exceptional judges and excellent administration and staff to continue our fine tradition,” Judge Sumners said.

Judge Currier, who currently serves as presiding judge for Part B of the Appellate Division, was nominated by Gov. Jim McGreevey and appointed to the bench in January 2004. She was assigned to the civil division in the Middlesex Vicinage for eight months before moving to the family division, where she served for four years before returning to the civil division in 2008. She was appointed to the Appellate Division in August 2015.

A graduate of Smith College, Judge Currier earned her law degree from Rutgers Law School – Camden.

The Appellate Division is the state's intermediate appellate court. Its judges are named by the chief justice from among the Superior Court judges. The Appellate Division issues more than 3,000 opinions and decides more than 9,000 motions each court year.

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