Supreme Court of Illinois

September 24, 2026

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT ASSIGNS HON. THOMAS DONNELLY TO FIRST DISTRICT APPELLATE COURT

The Illinois Supreme Court has announced the assignment of Cook County Circuit Judge Thomas More Donnelly to the First District Appellate Court. The assignment is effective October 16, 2026, and will continue until further order of the Court.

Judge Donnelly has served on the Circuit Court of Cook County for 25 years. He currently sits in the Chancery Division. He has served as a Circuit Judge of Cook County since 2021. He previously served as an associate judge for 19 years. While assigned to the Civil Jury Section First Municipal Division and the Law Division, he tried over 400 jury trials. Before joining the bench, Judge Donnelly clerked for Justice Mary Ann G. McMorrow and worked in the Cook County Public Defender's office for 12 years, serving as supervisor for 10 years. He supervised the Training Division, Misdemeanor and Felony Preliminary Hearing Courts, and the Post Conviction Unit.

Upon news of his assignment, Judge Donnelly said, "I am grateful to the Supreme Court for this new opportunity to serve the citizens of the State of Illinois."

Judge Donnelly serves as the vice-chair of the Illinois Judicial Conference's ADR Task Force. He previously served on the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Pretrial Practices and on the Statutory Court Fee Task Force. He served on the Illinois Judicial College Board of Trustees from 2016 until 2023 and served as liaison to the Committee on Judicial Education. From 2016 to 2019, he served as the inaugural chair of the Illinois Judicial College Board. He currently serves on the Illinois Judicial Ethics Committee.

He has chaired both the Chicago Bar Association Professional Responsibility Committee and the Illinois State Bar Association Standing Committee on Professional Conduct. He also served as Reporter for Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility, and as a member of the IPI Criminal Jury Instruction Committee for the Illinois Supreme Court. He helped draft Illinois Supreme court Rule 280, the Consumer Fairness Act, and the Illinois Driver's License Certificate Act. He also helped found the Statutory Suspension Pro Bono program, the First Municipal Jury Trial Pro Bono Program, and the Commercial Calendar Pro Bono Program.

Judge Donnelly earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from St. John's College and his *Juris Doctor* from the Loyola University School of Law. He has taught at Loyola since 1987 where he has taught Illinois Civil Procedure, Criminal Procedure, and Professional Responsibility. He served as the Director for Loyola's Philip Corboy Trial Advocacy Fellowship from 1996 to 2016. Loyola has awarded him the St. Robert Bellarmine Award and made him an honorary member of its Circle of Advocates. He additionally serves on the faculty of the National Judicial College where since 2017 he has taught hundreds of judges around the country.

Judge Donnelly's awards include the Chicago Bar Association's Vanguard Award, Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice's Hon. Thomas L. Kilbride (Ret.) Judicial Access to Justice Award, St. John's Alumni Association Award of Merit, Hon. Mary Ann G. McMorrow Distinguished Service Award from the Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity, the Impact Award from the Center for Disability and Elder Law, and the Harold Sullivan Award from the Illinois Judges Association, and the Catholic Lawyer of the Year from the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago. He has served on the boards of the Illinois Judges Association, the Chicago Bar Association, the Chicago Bar Foundation, Lawyers-Lend-Hand to Youth, the Lawyers Assistance Program, and the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago.

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