



For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, February 24, 2009

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Governor Announces Appointments to Franklin and Montgomery County Courts of Common Pleas; Akron Municipal Court

Columbus, Ohio – Governor Ted Strickland announced today the appointments of Orlando Williams, Stephen Fallis, and Linda Kersker to the Akron Municipal Court; Laurel Beatty and Kim Cocroft to the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas; and Connie Price to the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas.

Orlando Williams, Akron Municipal Court

Orlando Williams, 51, of Akron, has been appointed to the Akron Municipal Court.

Williams fills the seat vacated by the election of Judge Eve Belfance to the 9th District Court of Appeals.

“Orlando brings to the bench a distinguished legal career and a deep commitment to serving his community,” Strickland said. “He has consistently demonstrated a high standard of professionalism that will be a great asset to his judicial service.”

Williams has served as the managing partner at the law firm of Orlando J. Williams since 2001. Previously, Williams served as a managing partner for the law firm of Ivy and Williams from 1996-2001. He also previously served as a partner at the law firm of GA Clark and Associates from 1992-1996. From 1985-1992, he served as a litigation associate for the law firm of Roetzel and Andress. Williams began his career as a clerk and bailiff for Judge Charles J. Doneghy of the Lucas County Court of Common Pleas.

Williams is a member of the Akron Bar Association’s Board of Governors. He is also active in his community, serving as a member on the board of trustees of the Akron area YMCA and as a basketball coach for a Jewish community center.

Williams received a bachelor’s degree from Bowling Green State University in 1979 and a law degree from the University of Toledo in 1985.

“I am humbled by this opportunity, and I look forward to serving the court and the City of Akron,” Williams said.

Williams plans on taking the bench March 3.

Stephen A. Fallis, Akron Municipal Court

Stephen A. Fallis, 60, of Akron, has been appointed to the Akron Municipal Court.

Fallis fills the seat vacated by the election of Judge Alison McCarty to the Summit County Court of Common Pleas.

“Steve is an active community member and respected lawyer in Akron,” Strickland said. His legal expertise will serve him well on the municipal court.”

Fallis has served as the assistant law director for the City of Akron since 2004 and as a bar counsel for the Akron Bar Association since 2003. Previously, he had served as an attorney for Blakemore, Meeker & Bowler Co., L.P.A. from 1994-2004. He also served as an assistant law director for the City of Cuyahoga Falls from 1974-1976.

Fallis is also active in his community. He previously served as the president of the Akron Bar Association from 2001-2002. Fallis is a member of the United Way of Summit County and is a member of the Northeast Summit Family Services’ Board of Trustees.

Fallis received a bachelor’s degree from Kent State University in 1970 and a law degree from the University of Akron in 1973.

“I’m honored by this appointment, and I am committed to serving the court and people of Akron with integrity and fairness,” Fallis said.

Fallis plans on taking the bench March 3.

Linda Kersker, Akron Municipal Court

Linda Kersker, 61, of Akron, has been appointed to the Akron Municipal Court.

Kerkser fills the seat vacated by the election of Judge Lynne Callahan to the Summit County Court of Common Pleas.

“Linda’s career is marked by meaningful legal experience, which will bring great value to the court,” Strickland said.

Kersker joined the law firm of Brouse McDowell in 1972. She became the firm’s first female attorney, partner and litigation practice chair .

Kersker is an active member of her community. She was elected to the Akron Board of Education from 1992-2007 and served as its president three times. She is a lifetime member of the NAACP. Kersker has also served as a member of the board of trustees for the Salvation Army since 1998.

Kersker received a bachelor's degree from Denison University in 1969 and a law degree from the University of Michigan in 1972.

"Serving as a judge is a wonderful opportunity to blend my more than 30 years of trial experience with my life-long passion for public service," Kersker said.

Kersker will take the bench in March.

Laurel Beatty, Franklin County Court of Common Pleas

Laurel Beatty, 35, of Columbus has been appointed to the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas.

Beatty fills the seat vacated by the election of Judge John Connor to the 10th District Court of Appeals.

"I am pleased to have this opportunity to appoint Laurel to the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas," Strickland said. "Her diverse background as a lawyer and in public service will allow her to effectively serve the citizens of Franklin County."

Beatty has served as the director of legislative affairs and counsel to the Voting Rights Institute for the Ohio Secretary of State since 2007. She had previously served as an associate at the law firm of Otto Beatty Jr. & Associates from 2004-2007. She also previously served as a government relations and creditor's rights and bankruptcy associate for the law firm of Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter, LPA from 2001-2004.

Beatty is a board member for the YWCA of Columbus and for the Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Board of Franklin County. She is a member of the Columbus Bar Association and the Ohio State Bar Association.

"This appointment gives me the great opportunity to help make Franklin County a better place to live," Beatty said.

Beatty received a bachelor's degree from Spelman College in 1996 and a law degree from Vanderbilt University in 1999.

Beatty will take the bench on April 6.

Kim Cocroft, Franklin County Court of Common Pleas

Kim Cocroft, 35, of Columbus has been appointed to the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas.

Cocroft fills the seat vacated by the election of Judge Eric Brown to the Franklin County Probate Court.

“Kim has shown a deep commitment to public service and an in-depth knowledge of the legal system throughout her tenure in my office and in her career as an attorney,” Strickland said.

Cocroft has served as a deputy legal counsel for the Office of the Governor since 2007. She was previously an associate attorney for Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP from 2003-2007. Cocroft also served as a judicial law clerk at the Supreme Court of Ohio for Justice Alice Robie Resnick from 2001-2003.

Cocroft served as a board member for FIRSTLINK from 2005-2007. She is a member of the Commission on Continuing Legal Education for the Supreme Court of Ohio and will serve as chair of the commission this year. Cocroft previously served as the director of the Education Ministry for Triedstone Missionary Baptist Church from 2000-2007. She participated in the Columbus Bar Association’s Barrister Leaders Program and is a 2008 graduate of Leadership Columbus.

“I am deeply honored by this appointment that will afford me another avenue and opportunity to serve the citizens of Franklin County,” Cocroft said. “It has been a pleasure to serve Governor Strickland and I will work diligently to justify his confidence in me. I look forward to the challenges that lie ahead and I am excited to undertake this new service endeavor.”

Cocroft received a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and law degree from the Ohio State University in 1995, 1997, and 2000, respectively.

Cocroft will take the bench on April 6.

Connie Price, Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas

Connie Price has been appointed to the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas. This seat became vacant when Judge Jeffrey Froelich was elected to the 2nd District Court of Appeals.

Price, 50, of Brookville, has served as a county court judge in Montgomery County since her election in 1998. She also serves in private practice at Moore and Associates.

“Connie has proven herself to be a knowledgeable attorney, experienced judge and a community leader,” Strickland said. “She will serve Montgomery County with professionalism and a deep respect for the law.”

Price is involved in the Volunteer Lawyers Project, the League of Women Voters of Greater Dayton, and Wills for Heroes. She is a member of the Ohio State Bar Association's Special Committee to Review Gender Fairness Report as well as a life member of the VFW Ladies' Auxiliary and the NAACP.

"I am humbled by Governor Strickland's appointment and I am committed to serving the court and community with honesty and integrity," Price said.

Price received a bachelor's degree from Columbia Union College in 1986 and a law degree from the University of Dayton in 1990.

Price will take the bench on March 16.