



For Immediate Release

HARRIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT APPOINTS NEW JUDGE TO PRESIDE OVER CRIMINAL COURT AT LAW NO. 3

Feb. 3, 2022 — A Houston attorney with more than a decade of experience as both a criminal prosecutor and public defender has been named to the vacant bench in Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 3.

Ashley Mayes Guice was appointed by the Harris County Commissioners Court on Jan. 25, 2022. She will be sworn in during an Investiture Ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, at The Church Without Walls in west Houston.

She is replacing Judge Erica Hughes, who stepped down in December after being appointed by U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland to preside over Houston's Immigration Court. Guice will serve the remainder of the term, which ends Dec. 31, 2022.

"I'm inheriting a court that Judge Hughes ran very efficiently. It's a well-oiled machine," Guice said. "I look forward to implementing some of the same policies and procedures that she had in place. She did such a good job."

Guice has been a practicing attorney for 10 years. She began her law career in 2011 after earning a business management and legal studies degree from Tulane University and her law degree from Louisiana State University.

"I always had dreams of being a lawyer," the Houston-area native said, noting that it was her time at LSU that helped her discover her love for criminal law. "The trial world was what kept me going. I really caught the bug for litigation."

Upon graduation, Guice returned to Houston and began working closely with her mentor, Houston criminal attorney Hattie Shannon. She often shadowed Shannon at the Harris County Criminal Justice Center as she began to take her own cases.

Driven to affect change, Guice said she was eager to work in the Public Defender's Office but instead first caught the eye of prosecutors from the District Attorney's Office. They successfully recruited her to work for the department, where she spent more than six years focused primarily on sex crimes.

Guice said she loved working closely with law enforcement, following their investigations and guiding them in criminal charging decisions, and she appreciated the autonomy and opportunity to add her voice to important discussions.

But when she saw a position in the Public Defender's Office opened in 2019, she knew she had to take the leap. Guice said she embraced the department's holistic approach to defending clients, which included not just a zealous courtroom defense but also connecting defendants with needed community support services.

Guice remained with the Public Defender's Office until her appointment to the bench last week.

"This kind of presented itself," Guice said, noting that she'd often thought about becoming a judge. "I feel like now is the perfect time, the perfect opportunity for me to take the bench and meld together the things I've learned on both sides of the law and oversee cases from a different perspective."

For Guice, the most important part of justice is equality. Everyone who comes before the court deserves to be respected and have their cases handled thoroughly, she said. They shouldn't have to worry about the impact of demographics that might separate them from others in the courtroom.

"An equal system where people have access to a fair and impartial judge and get a fair shot," Guice said. "Equal justice for all – I definitely think we're moving closer to accomplishing that in Harris County."

Though eager to take on the new role, the moment is poignant for Guice, whose father passed away suddenly almost three weeks ago. She said she buried her father the same day the commissioner's court voted to appoint her to the bench.

"I have a renewed sense of accomplishing something, making a difference to honor him. It's a very important part of my drive right now. He would love to see this happen to me. I can't believe he won't be here," Guice said, recalling the invaluable role her father played in her life. "I want to honor his legacy with my actions on the bench."

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