



For Immediate Release

PRESIDING, CO-PRESIDING JUDGES RE-ELECTED TO REPRESENT HARRIS COUNTY CRIMINAL COURTS AT LAW

Jan. 12, 2022 — Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 9 Judge Toria Finch has been elected to her second consecutive term as the presiding judge for the county's 16 criminal courts at law.

Also re-elected was Judge Genesis Draper, who sits on the bench of Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 12 and serves alongside Judge Finch as co-presiding judge.

A key judicial leadership role, the presiding judge is tasked with providing administrative oversight and serving as liaison to county departments, officials, and projects, as well as convening and presiding over judicial meetings, serving on justice-related committees, and appointing substitute judges when needed.

The co-presiding judge carries out these duties when the presiding judge is not available. Both terms last six months, running through June 30, 2022.

Presiding Judge Finch is a first-generation attorney from Tennessee with experience in civil litigation, as well as criminal, family and juvenile law. She previously served as an assistant juvenile public defender with the Travis County Juvenile Public Defender's Office in Austin, where she became board certified in juvenile law.

Upon moving to Houston, she served as an assistant district attorney for the Harris County District Attorney's Office, where she tried misdemeanor and felony bench and jury trials and achieved the level of felony prosecutor, juvenile detention court chief and misdemeanor court chief. She later founded The Finch Law Firm.

Judge Finch currently serves as adjunct professor for Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law as well as adjunct professor and advisory committee chairperson for the Alvin Community College Paralegal Studies Program. She previously worked as an adjunct professor in the University of Texas School of Law Juvenile Law Clinic.

She earned a bachelor's degree in business marketing from Alabama A&M University, a Paralegal Certificate from Southeastern Paralegal Institute, and a J.D. from Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law.

Co-Presiding Judge Draper hails from a family of servant leaders and has spent more than a decade representing indigent people accused of crimes.

She earned a bachelor's degree in English from Spelman College and a J.D. from University of Texas School of Law. Upon graduation from law school, she moved to Nashville, where she worked as an assistant public defender. After moving to Houston, she served as a public defender at the federal and state level.

Judge Draper was elected judge of Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 12 in January 2020 after being appointed to fill a vacancy on the bench the previous year.

Placing an emphasis on sharing her knowledge, Judge Draper has traveled across the country lecturing and training lawyers on the best practices in indigent defense. She also works as an adjunct professor teaching advanced trial advocacy at the University of Houston Law Center.

She previously served on the boards of the Texas Civil Rights Project and Houston Texans YMCA.

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