



*For Immediate Release*

## **Harris County Courts at Law elect judges to serve in key leadership roles representing and advocating for the county courts**

*Jan. 7, 2025* — The Harris County Courts at Law have elected four judges to serve in key judicial leadership roles representing the county’s criminal and civil courts.

Judge Sedrick Walker was named Local Administrative Judge for the 20 Harris County Criminal and Civil Courts at Law.

Judges Erika Ramirez and Genesis Draper were selected to serve as Presiding Judge and Co-Presiding Judge, respectively, for the 16 county criminal courts, while Judge Audrie Lawton-Evans was tapped to serve as Administrative Judge for the four county civil courts.

Administrative and Presiding judges are tasked with providing judicial leadership and general administrative guidance, including convening and presiding over judicial meetings and serving as judicial representatives and liaisons for the courts when working with various county departments, officials, and projects.

All positions took effect on Jan. 1, 2025.

### **Local Administrative Judge, Harris County Courts at Law**

**Judge Walker** is serving his first two-year term as Local Administrative Judge for the Harris County Courts at Law, taking over for County Criminal Court at Law No. 9 Judge Toria Finch.

A native Houstonian, Judge Walker was first elected to County Criminal Court at Law No. 11 in November 2018 and re-elected in November 2022. He previously served as Presiding Judge for the county criminal courts from July 2020 through June 2021.

During his time on the bench, he presided over one of the county’s four S.O.B.E.R. — Saving Ourselves By Education & Recovery — Court programs. The specialty court aims to address addiction and reduce recidivism by providing intensive treatment and supervision for those on probation for impaired driving.

Judge Walker began his legal career at the Harris County District Attorney’s Office. He later worked as a criminal defense attorney in private practice. He holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Texas A&M University and a law degree from the University of Texas School of Law.

### **Presiding/Co-Presiding Judges, Harris County Criminal Courts at Law**

**Judge Ramirez** is serving her first six-month term as Presiding Judge, taking over for Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 4 Judge Shannon Baldwin. She spent the past year serving two six-month terms as Co-Presiding Judge.

A Houston native, Judge Ramirez was elected to Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 8 in November 2022, becoming the first Latina to sit on the Court 8 bench. She also presides over one of the county’s four S.O.B.E.R. courts.

Before becoming an attorney, Judge Ramirez worked as a teacher, promotions coordinator for the Houston Comets, and caseworker assistant for the Harris County District’s Attorney’s Office, helping victims of domestic violence — the last of which spurred her interest in law school.

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After law school, she returned to the District Attorney's Office where she spent seven years handling both felony and misdemeanor cases and working in the trial bureau and domestic violence, juvenile, and financial crimes divisions. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas and a law degree from South Texas College of Law.

**Judge Draper** is serving her first six-month term as Co-Presiding Judge, taking over for Judge Ramirez. She previously served two six-month terms — July 2022 to July 2023 — as Presiding Judge for the Harris County Criminal Courts at Law.

A Texas native, Judge Draper was first appointed to Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 12 in 2019. She was elected the following year to finish the remainder of the unexpired term and then re-elected to a full four-year term in 2022. She previously presided over one of Harris County's four S.O.B.E.R. courts.

Judge Draper also teaches advanced trial advocacy as an adjunct professor at the University of Houston Law Center and was selected as a 2022 Fellow for the American Leadership Forum.

Before assuming the bench, she spent 12 years as an assistant public defender at both the state and federal level. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Spelman College and a law degree from University of Texas School of Law.

### **Administrative Judge, Harris County Civil Courts at Law**

Judge Lawton-Evans is serving her second one-year term as Administrative Judge for the Harris County Civil Courts at Law, taking over for Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 4 Judge Manpreet Monica Singh.

A native Houstonian and civil litigation attorney, Judge Lawton-Evans was first appointed to Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 1 in 2021 and then elected to a four-year term the following year. She previously served as Administrative Judge for the county civil courts in 2022.

Judge Lawton-Evans began her legal career as an assistant attorney general in the Texas Attorney General's Civil Litigation Division in Austin. After returning to Houston, she served as assistant disciplinary counsel for the State Bar of Texas, special prosecutor for the state's Special Prosecution Unit, and general counsel for a Houston company.

She is licensed by the State Bar of Texas and the Federal Courts' Southern, Eastern, Western, and Northern districts of Texas, as well as the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. She also is a member of the Houston Bar Association and has worked with the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Association to help match lawyers with indigent clients.

Judge Lawton-Evans holds a bachelor's degree in history from Loyola University and a law degree from Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law.

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