



Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan

701 COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER • 2 WOODWARD AVE • DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226-3413



For Immediate Release

**Contact: Zenell B. Brown, Executive Court Administrator
(313) 224-2236**

**Subject: Introduction of the Third Circuit Court Chief Judge Pro
Tempore and Presiding Judges**

Detroit, MI – The Michigan Supreme Court has appointed Judge Patricia Perez Fresard to serve as the Chief Judge of the Third Circuit Court starting January 1, 2023.

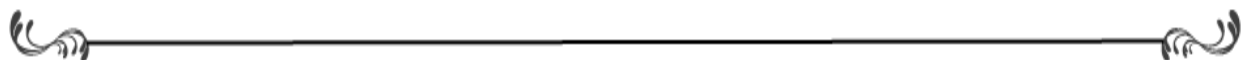


Judge Patricia Perez Fresard has served as a Wayne County Circuit Court Judge since 1999. Judge Fresard began her judicial career as a Felony Trial Court Judge and initial Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division's Drug Court. She presided over hundreds of criminal felony trials including murder, rape, carjacking, drug, and firearm charges.

Judge Fresard was accepted by bid to the Civil Division in 2012 and selected by Chief Judge Colombo as Presiding Judge of the Civil Division in 2016. In 2019, Chief Judge Timothy M. Kenny appointed Judge Fresard as Chief Judge Pro Tem and Presiding Judge of the Civil Division. Judge Fresard has spearheaded efforts to ensure that case backlogs are addressed, supported competitive wages for court personnel, and championed the Court's ongoing collaboration with the legal community.

Judge Fresard will be the second woman and the first Hispanic to serve as Chief Judge of the Third Circuit Court.

As Chief, Judge Fresard seeks to continue on the path of delivering quality services to the public and creating a productive, innovative work environment. Her primary goals include the move of the Criminal Division to the new Criminal Court Complex, the establishment of the Family Court as prescribed by statute, and the continued advancement of an inclusive workplace culture. Judges, court management, and staff will be invited to participate in the various 2023 Strategic Plan initiatives and projects.



The Mission of Third Judicial Circuit Court is to provide accessible and equal justice with timely dispute resolution. **The Third Judicial Circuit** has jurisdiction over Civil, Criminal, and Family matters arising in the County of Wayne. The National Center for State Courts has cited the Third Circuit Court as one of the model urban courts in the United States for case flow management and the timely disposition of the Court's docket. For more information, visit our website www.3rdcc.org, follow us at Twitter@3rdccorg, and like us on Facebook @3rdccorg.



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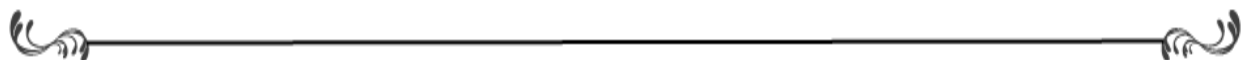
The Chief Judge under Michigan Court Rule 8.100 shall select a Chief Judge Pro Tempore and a Presiding Judge of any division of the trial court. Chief Judge Patricia Perez Fresard is pleased to introduce her selection for Chief Judge Pro Tempore and Presiding Judges:



Judge Leslie Kim Smith will serve as the Chief Judge Pro Tem and the Presiding Judge of the Civil Division. Judge Smith has an illustrious judicial career; she has served on the Third Circuit Court since April 2003. She has been in the Civil Division since September 2013. From April 2003 to August 2013, Judge Smith served on the Family Division-Juvenile Section, and she was the Presiding Judge in that division from January 2009 to December 2012. As Presiding Judge, she led the restructuring of legal representation for children involved in child welfare and juvenile justice matters. She currently serves on the Court's Executive Bench Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee. Judge Smith also served as a judge for the 30th Judicial District Court in Highland Park, Michigan from January 1987 to April 2003 and was the Chief Judge from January 1988 to April 2003. Prior to coming to the bench, Judge Smith was an Assistant Attorney General.



Judge Cylenthia LaToye Miller will serve as the Presiding Judge of Wayne County's Third Circuit Court Family-Juvenile Division. Judge Miller was appointed to the Third Judicial Circuit Court on July 22, 2019 and is assigned to the Juvenile Division. Judge Miller served on the 36th Judicial District Court from April 10, 2006 through August 18, 2019. Judge Miller was the Founding & Presiding Judge over Street Outreach Court Detroit, which assists Detroit's homeless population with clearing their driver's licenses and returning to self-sufficiency. Judge Miller is an Adjunct Professor at Baker College of Allen Park and Baker College of Jackson. She has worked in the Criminal Justice Department since 2012 and in the Humanities Department since 2016. Judge Miller received her Juris Doctor, *cum laude*, from Michigan State University College of Law in 1996. Judge Miller was admitted to the State Bar of Michigan in 1996 and to the State Bar of Arkansas in 1997.



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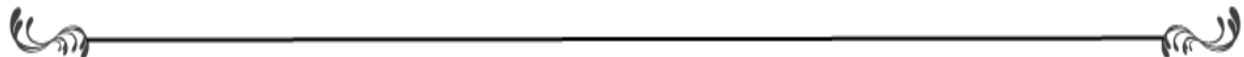
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Judge Donald Knapp will serve as the Presiding Judge of Wayne County's Third Circuit Court Criminal Division. Judge Knapp was appointed to the Third Circuit Court in April of 2018. Prior to that appointment, he served for nine years as the Livonia city attorney during which time he advised the Mayor, City Council, department heads, and commissions, handled criminal prosecutions, litigated civil litigation filed against the City of Livonia, and managed the Law Department's other attorneys and staff. He also specialized in commercial and civil litigation, probate and estate planning, and municipal law at Fausone Bohn, LLP in Northville for fourteen years. Judge Knapp's career began as a research attorney for Third Circuit Court Judge Timothy M. Kenny. He also worked as a legislative aide for then State Senator Thaddeus McCotter and as an associate attorney for a small medical malpractice defense firm, respectively. He is a graduate of the Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University, University of Michigan-Dearborn, and Detroit Catholic Central. Judge Knapp was elected to the Livonia City Council in 2001 and re-elected in 2005. He was active in the Livonia Chamber of Commerce. He is a member of the Federalist Society, Livonia Bar Association, and Detroit Bar Association.



Judge Melissa Cox will serve as the Presiding Judge of Wayne County's Third Circuit Court Family Domestic Relations Division. Judge Cox was elected to the Third Judicial Circuit Court in November 2016. Judge Cox graduated from the University of Michigan and received her Juris Doctorate from Ave Maria School of Law. She began her legal career as a law clerk for the law firm Fausone Bohn, LLP, in Northville. She continued to work for the firm as an associate attorney, focusing her practice in family law. She handled a high-volume caseload of divorce, custody, and adoption matters. Additionally, throughout her career, she served as assistant city attorney for several municipalities and, in that capacity, prosecuted criminal misdemeanors and civil infractions and defended civil litigation lawsuits. She has been afforded recognition as a Super Lawyer Rising Star for the past six years and has been named by Hour Magazine as a Top Female Attorney. She is a member of the



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Wayne County Family Bar Association, the Incorporated Society of Irish American Lawyers, and the past Vice President of the Livonia Bar Association.

The Administrative team will be led by Zenell B. Brown, who has served as the Executive Court Administrator since 2014 and Richard M. Lynch who has served as the General Counsel since 2014.

The Court has 58 judges and over 500 staff. The Mission of Third Judicial Circuit Court is to provide accessible and equal justice with timely dispute resolution. The Court receives approximately 60,000 new filings each year.

To learn more about the Court, visit its website at www.3rdcc.org, follow the Court at [Twitter@3rdccorg](https://twitter.com/3rdccorg), and like them on Facebook [@3rdccorg](https://www.facebook.com/3rdccorg).

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