

Hon. Estela M. De La Cruz

Honorable Estela M. De La Cruz, J.S.C. engaged in both defense and plaintiff litigation before her appointment to the Superior Court of New Jersey by Governor Christine Todd Whitman in 1997. She graduated from Seton Hall University in 1979 with a B.A. degree and earned her J.D. from Rutgers School of Law, Newark in 1982. She was sworn-in on June 9, 1997 by Assignment Judge Sybil Moses and has served on the Bergen bench to this date.

Judge De La Cruz was first assigned to the Civil Division, serving for two years before being reassigned to the Family Division in 1999. She served in the Family Division for three and a half years and was then reassigned back to the Civil Division in 2002, where she has served to the present time.

In 2013, Judge De La Cruz was temporarily assigned to the Chancery Division to preside over the estate trial involving the matters of Cohen v. Perelman, BER-C-94-12 and In the Matter of Estate of Robert B. Perelman, BER-P-211-12. This one bench trial on these two dockets lasted six months, and during which time, Judge De La Cruz also continued to otherwise carry and case manage all the civil dockets that already had been assigned to her. That litigation took nearly six years to come to a final conclusion.

She has participated in various professional activities including the Justice Morris Pashman American Inn of Court and the New Jersey Supreme Court Civil Practice Committee. Judge De La Cruz has been a member and participant of numerous bar associations, including the New Jersey State Bar Association, the National Association of Women Judges, the Hispanic National Bar Association, the Bergen County Bar Association and the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey, of which she is a former President. Judge De La Cruz also completed a Supreme Court committee assignment on the New Jersey Judiciary Language Access Plan that resulted in the AOC Directive #01-17. Important to ensure streamlined judicial processes, that directive sets forth an organized plan for reasonable and fair access to language services to ensure all people, including persons with limited English proficiency and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, to have equal access to court proceedings, programs, and services. 2021 marks her 24th year on the bench.