

From Bar to Bench: Sharing Unique Perspectives

Most judges describe the journey from bar to bench as nonlinear. Becoming a judge from practice at the bar is less about a single "right" path and more about being intentional over many years: building your skill sets, developing your reputation and relationships, and last, your readiness for public service. To assist those on this journey, we have put together a panel with useful insights. This panel made up Nicole Revenaugh, an attorney known to be a "sherpa" to those seeking the bench, Erin Sindberg Porter, the chairperson for the Minnesota Commission of Judicial Selection, Justin Whitten, a Minnesota native and general counsel to Governor Laura Kelly. Rounding out the panel and serving as moderator is Hon. Kellie Hogan, who can speak about judicial elections. From this session, attendees will:

- Understand the importance of being intentional in the steps that you take in your career.
- Gain insights about the judicial selection process and what skill sets they are looking for in a judge.
- Hear from a governor's general counsel about their office's interview and selection process.
- Learn how to prepare for a successful judicial election.

Presenters:



Nicole Revenaugh

Nicole Revenaugh is the owner of Irigonegaray & Revenaugh, a boutique law firm dedicated to providing a range of legal services including personal injury, criminal defense, and estate planning. Her firm also represents individuals and nonprofit organizations in matters involving constitutional rights related to women's healthcare, voting, and upholding equal protection of the law.

Nicole was appointed judge pro tem of the Shawnee County District Court in 2019, overseeing the eviction, small claims, and limited action dockets on an interim and then intermittent basis from 2019-2021.

Nicole currently serves on the Alumni Association Board of Governors at Washburn University School of Law, and on the Appellant Bench Bar Committee for the Kansas appellate courts. In past years, she has served on the Kansas Bar Association's Judicial Retention Committee, and has worked alongside several organizations to help maintain a fair and impartial court system free from political influence, and ensure that Kansas judges are evaluated on their merit during statewide retention elections.



Erin Sindberg Porter

Erin Sindberg Porter represents clients in high-stakes civil litigation and commercial disputes, government-facing litigation, state attorneys general and federal government investigations, and internal investigations.

A Chambers-ranked litigator, Erin has represented clients in state and federal courts in each phase of litigation, from pretrial counseling to appeal. She develops strategy and the presentation of those strategies at trial.

In 2020, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz appointed Erin as Chair of Minnesota's Commission on Judicial Selection, a 49-member commission of attorney and non-attorney members who solicit, evaluate, and recommend to the Governor judicial candidates for state district court vacancies. Erin has assisted Governor Walz with more than 131 appointments to Minnesota's district and appellate courts.

Erin serves as pro bono partner for the Minneapolis Office and represents youth in foster care through the Children's Law Center. Erin serves on the District of Minnesota Federal Practice Committee and on the High Winds Fund at Macalester College.



Justin Whitten

Justin Whitten has been Chief Counsel to Kansas Governor Laura Kelly since December of 2021. He has helped Governor Kelly appoint 49 judges. He oversees litigation involving the Governor and assists in litigation affecting various executive branch agencies. He reviews proposed and passed legislation to assist executive agencies in implementation.

Justin was Chief Counsel for the Kansas Department of Labor starting in March of 2019, and before that, he was a trial attorney with the United States Department of Labor for seven years.

Justin graduated from Washington University in St. Louis in 2012 as Order of the Coif and graduated in 2005 from the University of Colorado, Boulder with honors with a B.S. in Applied Mathematics.

Justin is a native of Minnesota, having lived in St. Paul and Minneapolis. He now resides in Lawrence, Kansas with his wife and two young sons. He enjoys coaching youth soccer.”

Hon. Kellie Hogan (moderator)