

MEET THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE



President Joseph R. Biden and Attorney General B. Merrick Garland announced the appointment of Rachel Rossi as Director of the Office for Access to Justice in May 2022.

Prior to her appointment, Director Rossi served as Deputy Associate Attorney General in the Office of the Associate Attorney General, Vanita Gupta. In that role, she also served as the inaugural Anti-Hate Coordinator for the Justice Department.

Director Rossi began her career as a public defender in Los Angeles for almost a decade. She practiced in the Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office, the Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender's Office, and the Federal Public Defender's Office for the Central District of California, where she vigorously defended hundreds of low-income clients in state and federal courts.

Director Rossi then served as Counsel to Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Richard J. Durbin (Illinois), where she was the lead staffer on the First Step Act, a major U.S. federal criminal justice reform bill signed into law in 2018 that created comprehensive sentencing and prison reforms. She then transitioned to the role of Counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, working for then Crime Subcommittee Chair Karen Bass (CA-37).

In 2020, Director Rossi was the first former public defender to run for the nonpartisan seat of District Attorney of Los Angeles County, where she was only five points shy of qualifying for the runoff election, receiving almost half a million votes. She then served as the Legal Director for the REFORM Alliance, where she launched the development of a litigation program for direct representation in criminal cases and in civil litigation matters surrounding issues of probation, parole, supervised release, and community supervision.

Director Rossi received her law degree from Pepperdine University School of Law, where she won the International Moot Court Competition, in Grays Inn, London, and served as Student Articles Editor for the Pepperdine Dispute Resolution Law Journal. She received the Pepperdine University School of Law Larry D. Kimmons Racial and Social Justice Award, was named one of the National Bar Association's Top 40 Under 40 Lawyers, and was recognized as an Influential Capitol Hill Staffer by Lawyers of Color. Director Rossi grew up in Los Angeles, California. She is the daughter of immigrant parents born in the Dominican Republic and Greece.