



For Immediate Release

NEW JUDGE APPOINTED TO PRESIDE OVER HARRIS COUNTY CIVIL COURT AT LAW NO. 4

March 25, 2022 — A Houston attorney with experience in both affirmative and defensive civil litigation has been appointed to the bench of Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 4.

Judge Miryeya Ayala was sworn in on March 12, 2022, after being appointed by Harris County Commissioners just four days prior.

She replaced Judge Lesley Briones, who served in the role since April 2019 and stepped down to run for a seat on the Harris County Commissioners Court. Judge Ayala will serve the remainder of Briones' term, which ends on Dec. 31, 2022.

"I'm here as a public servant. My parents did a really great job of instilling the importance of public service in their children," Judge Ayala said, noting that her brother, a state trooper with the Texas Highway Patrol, is also a public servant. "You should take your talents and use them to benefit the public. I really believe that."

Judge Ayala comes from the Harris County Attorney's Office, where she has been practicing law for the past four years.

During her first year, Judge Ayala worked on affirmative litigation, filing lawsuits to shut down illegal businesses like illicit game rooms and massage parlors. She then moved into defensive work, which involved defending the county and its employees from lawsuits related to car and job accidents, employment issues and terminations, and federal civil rights cases.

That wide range of experience combined with her familiarity of Judge Briones' established practices, she said, is helping her make a smooth transition.

"Judge Briones did such a wonderful job of keeping everything moving very efficiently," Judge Ayala said. "I want to continue that."

Judge Ayala earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Duke University in 2014 and law degree from the University of Texas School of Law in 2017. Drawn to litigation, she worked with the UT School of Law's Domestic Violence Clinic while still in law school.

"I represented victims of domestic violence and divorce cases," she said, recalling a case in which she was able to get a divorce granted for a victim of spousal abuse. "It was incredibly meaningful."

After graduation, Judge Ayala moved to Houston and joined the Harris County Attorney's Office.

For Judge Ayala, the key to justice is making sure people have access to the courts and are truly heard when there. The first, access, has increased significantly during the pandemic thanks to virtual court, she said. The second has to be actively practiced every day.

When people come to court, they're often facing the biggest problem in their life, Judge Ayala said. For example, she said, take someone who can't pay rent. Maybe, she said, the person can't pay because they were sick or their car broke down and they missed work.

You must follow the law in such cases, she said, but that doesn't prevent you from listening to their story and learning about their circumstances.

"Giving them the opportunity to explain what happened is really important," Judge Ayala said. "Just because things happen doesn't mean they're inherently bad people. It gives them an opportunity to say their peace."

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