



For Immediate Release

Harris County Criminal and Civil Courts at Law elect judges to serve in key leadership roles representing and advocating for the county courts

Jan. 9, 2026 — The Harris County Courts at Law have elected three judges to serve in key judicial leadership roles representing the county's criminal and civil courts.

Judges Ashely Mayes Guice and Tonya Jones were selected to serve as Presiding Judge and Co-Presiding Judge, respectively, for the 16 county criminal courts, while Judge Jim Kovach was tapped to serve as Administrative Judge for the five county civil courts.

Administrative and Presiding judges are tasked with providing judicial leadership and general administrative guidance, including convening and presiding over judicial meetings and serving as judicial representatives and liaisons for the courts when working with various county departments, officials, and projects.

All positions took effect on Jan. 1, 2026.

Presiding/Co-Presiding Judges, Harris County Criminal Courts at Law

Judge Guice is serving her first six-month term as Presiding Judge, taking over for Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 8 Judge Erika Ramirez.

A Houston native, Judge Guice was appointed to the Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 12 bench in June 2025. She is expected to serve the remainder of the unexpired term, which runs through 2026.

The appointment marked the second time she was tapped by Harris County Commissioners to fill a vacancy in the criminal misdemeanor courts. In 2022, she was appointed to the vacant County Criminal Court at Law No. 3 bench and served the 11 months remaining in the unexpired term.

Since graduating from law school in 2011, Judge Guice has worked as a private criminal defense attorney and public defender for the Harris County Public Defender's Office, as well as a prosecutor and later misdemeanor division chief for the Harris County District Attorney's Office. She also served as the staff attorney for the 20 Harris County Courts at Law.

Judge Guice holds a bachelor's degree from Tulane University and a law degree from Louisiana State University.

Judge Jones is serving her second six-month term as Co-Presiding Judge. She previously served a two-year term as the local administrative judge representing the 20 Harris County Courts at Law.

A Houston native, Judge Jones was first elected to Harris County Criminal Court at Law No. 15 in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. She also presided over one of Harris County's four S.O.B.E.R. courts.

Judge Jones began her legal career in 2011, working primarily as a criminal defense attorney in Harris and Fort Bend counties. She also worked in family and personal injury law.



She holds a bachelor's degree from Baylor University and a law degree from Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

When she isn't serving the citizens of Harris County, she enjoys traveling, reading, and playing pickleball with her husband, Jarvis Simon.

Administrative Judge, Harris County Civil Courts at Law

Judge Kovach is serving his third one-year term as Administrative Judge for the Harris County Civil Courts at Law, taking over for Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 1 Judge Audrie Lawton-Evans. He previously held the position in 2018 and 2019.



The first openly gay judge to preside over a county civil court, Judge Kovach was first elected to Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 2 in 2018 and then re-elected in 2022.

Judge Kovach has more than three decades of legal experience, including 26 years in Harris County, and has handled more than 10,000 cases. Before becoming a judge, he owned his own law firm, representing both plaintiffs and defendants.

He is licensed by the State Bar of Texas and the Federal Courts' Southern, Eastern, and Western districts of Texas, as well as the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. He also is a member of the Houston Bar Association and its Litigation Section and has worked with Houston Volunteer Lawyers.

He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas and a law degree from the University of Houston Law Center.

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