



Harris County commissioners tap associate judge to fill County Civil Court at Law No. 1 bench

When Judge Sonia Lopez was appointed to the bench of Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 1, it felt like she had come full circle.

It had been 20 years since she first set foot in the Harris County Administration Building as a young college student, eager to serve as the first-ever intern for then-Commissioner Sylvia Garcia.

She'd always wanted to be an attorney, but with no lawyers in her orbit at the time, she'd felt uncertain about navigating the journey. Her internship changed that, setting her on the path that led her back to the same building more than two decades later.



“It was really like a dream come true,” Judge Lopez said. “And for it to happen the way it did — unanimously and in the same building. It was very surreal.”

A Houston native, Judge Lopez was appointed by Harris County Commissioners in December and formally took the bench on Feb. 1, 2026. She replaced Judge Audrie Lawton-Evans, who stepped down in January.

Before her appointment, Judge Lopez had most recently served as Associate Judge for the Harris County Civil Courts at Law, overseeing their eviction docket.

The judge began her career after graduating from the University of Texas at Austin in 2007. She spent five years as the chief of staff for Texas Rep. Ana Hernandez before leaving to attend South Texas College of Law, earning her law degree in 2015.

While in law school, she spent two years as a law clerk for a Houston-based personal injury firm. After graduating, she joined the Houston Federation of Teachers as their grievance director, a post she held for more than six years.

In 2022, she joined Lone Star College, where she worked as associate general counsel until she was tapped last December to serve as the associate judge for the Harris County Civil Courts at Law.

“They say it takes a village to raise a child and to succeed. My village is really awesome and has been constant throughout my life. This is not only my accomplishment. It is something we did together,” the judge said upon the announcement of her appointment during commissioners court.

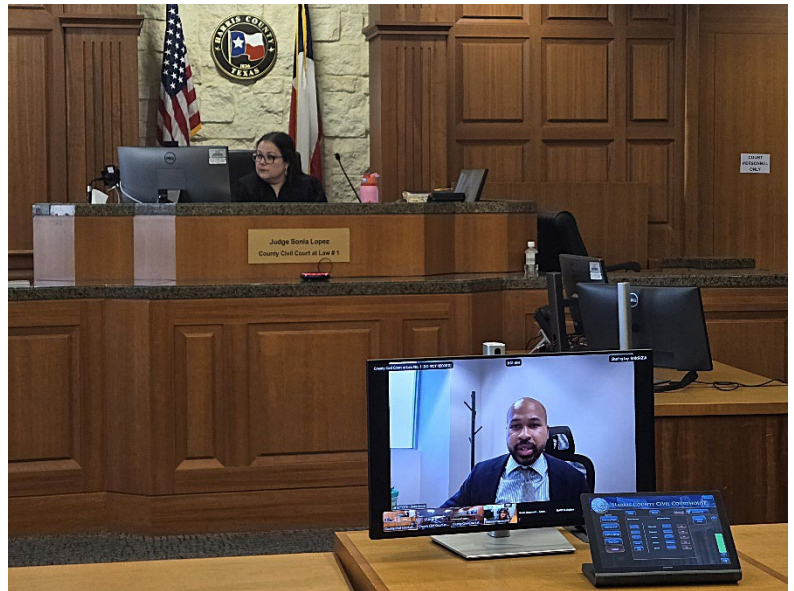
“To Harris County, I promise to do as my parents have taught me — to always work hard and treat everybody with respect. I hope to earn your trust, the residents of Harris County, as it is the best place to live and work. Thank you all for this honor.”

On the bench, Judge Lopez said she is focused on making sure all who come before her feel as though they got to have their day in court and were heard. The county civil courts, she noted, serve as a sort of middle ground — more formal than a Justice Court but with more self-represented litigants than a civil district court.

“My goal has been making sure everybody has their day in court,” Judge Lopez said. “At the end of the day, whichever way a judge rules, you want to feel like you had a fair shot.”

Off the bench, her focus is on the next generation and making sure they have access to opportunities just as she once did. The judge serves as a volunteer project administrator for the Houston office of the National Hispanic Institute — the same organization that helped her secure her initial Harris County internship.

“I’m a girl who grew up on Jensen and Tidwell. Many folks are afraid to even drive down there, but that’s home,” the judge said. “Whether it’s being the first person from my neighborhood to become a judge or the 15th, I want to make sure there’s many more behind me.”



HARRIS COUNTY COURTS AT LAW

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