Justice Anne M. Burke was elected to the office of Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court at the Court’s September 2019 Term. She will serve a three-year term commencing October 26, 2019, succeeding Lloyd A. Karmeier, whose tenure as Chief Justice ended on Oct. 25, 2019. Chief Justice Burke is the third woman to serve as Chief Justice, following the late Mary Ann McMorrow and current Justice Rita B. Garman.

“I would like to thank my colleagues for the honor of serving the great State of Illinois as the 121st Chief Justice,” Chief Justice Burke said. “I would also like to congratulate Justice Karmeier on his productive and successful term as Chief. His leadership provided a steady hand for the Judicial Branch during a difficult time of financial uncertainty. I look forward to working with all of our justice partners to build on that momentum over the next three years.”

As Chief Justice, Justice Burke will serve as the chief administrative officer of the Supreme Court, which is constitutionally vested with general administrative and supervisory authority over the more than 900 judges in the statewide judicial system.

Among other duties, the Chief Justice selects the items to be placed on the Supreme Court's agenda for the Court’s consideration during its constitutionally-mandated five terms each year; supervises all appointments to Supreme Court committees, serves as chairperson of the Executive Committee of the constitutionally-mandated Illinois Judicial Conference and presents the Court’s annual budget request to the General Assembly.

Chief Justice Burke has set as her key initiative during her term, a “Listening Tour” to be hosted by the Illinois State Bar Association. The Tour will consist of Chief Justice Burke, ISBA President David B. Sosin, and others, traveling to multiple districts throughout Illinois to conduct forums where local stakeholders can engage in dialogue about the way justice is administered across the state. The goals of the Listening Tour will be to focus attention on the recently released Strategic Agenda, to foster discussion and to exchange ideas about our system of justice.

The listening tour is expected to kick off in early 2020 and additional details will be available closer to that time.
Justice Burke brings to the office of Chief Justice a wealth of experience. She was appointed to the Supreme Court on July 6, 2006, and then elected to that office in 2008. In 2018, she was retained for a second 10-year term with 81 percent of the vote. Prior to joining the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Burke served as a Justice of the Appellate Court, First District. After being appointed in 1995, she was elected to the Appellate bench the following year, where she served until July 5, 2006. Her judicial career began earlier, in 1987, with an appointment to the Illinois Court of Claims by Governor Jim Thompson. She was the first woman to serve on that court and was later reappointed to the position by Governor Jim Edgar. Before serving in the Court of Claims, she was appointed by Governor Jim Edgar as Special Counsel for Child Welfare Services and was a member of his Legislative Committee on Juvenile Justice.

Chief Justice Burke received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the DePaul University School for New Learning, where she majored in Education. She then attended the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago-Kent College of Law and received her Juris Doctorate in 1983. Chief Justice Burke has been recognized with honorary degrees from 13 colleges and universities, including: St. Ambrose University, Catholic Theological Union, DePaul University, College of the Holy Cross, Aurora University, Lewis University, Loyola University Chicago School of Law, MacMurray College, Blackburn College, The John Marshall Law School, Marquette University, St. Mary's College and Dominican University.

A longtime advocate for children with learning differences, Chief Justice Burke started her career teaching physical education at the Chicago Park District. There she took part in a new program that offered children and young adults with mental and physical differences the opportunity to learn the skills to participate in sports. Having recognized the positive impact that sports competition had on her students, she championed the idea of a city-wide competition. This ultimately led to the creation of the Chicago Special Olympics in 1968, and grew to become the International Special Olympics, reaching tens of millions in 192 nations across the globe. Chief Justice Burke later served as a Director of the International Special Olympics and remains involved with the Chicago Special Olympics organization to this day. Currently, Chief Justice Burke serves on the Executive Steering Committee of the Kennedy Forum Illinois, whose goal is to bring about advancements in the way mental health and addictions are considered and treated.

As a member of the Illinois Supreme Court, Chief Justice Burke is a frequent speaker and panelist before many civic organizations and local Bar Associations. For more than two years, serving as Interim Chair, she directed the efforts of the National Review Board of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops investigating the causes and effects of the clerical sexual abuse scandal and helped to establish guidelines and policies for effectively responding to this scandal.

Chief Justice Burke is married, the mother of five children, and the grandmother of nine.

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(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Chris Bonjean, Communications Director to the Illinois Supreme Court at 312.793.2323 or cbonjean@illinoiscourts.gov.)