

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2011

**ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT NAMES ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR
CYNTHIA Y. COBBS TO COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT**

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Supreme Court announced Thursday the appointment of Cynthia Y. Cobbs to a judicial vacancy in the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Ms. Cobbs resigned her position as Director of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts to accept the judicial appointment. She was the first woman and the first African American to serve as Administrative Director and her tenure as Director is the second longest since the position was established in 1960.

Ms. Cobbs was named to the Cook County vacancy, at large, created by the retirement earlier this year of Henry R. Simmons, Jr. The appointment is effective Friday, September 23 and terminates December 3, 2012.

Ms. Cobbs was named Director March 1, 2002 and has served under five Chief Justices. Her steady and loyal stewardship has helped guide the Supreme Court and the judicial branch through severe economic times, tight budgets and a technological revolution.

"She has served loyally and with dedication during rough economic times," said Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride. "The Court appreciates and values her long years of service and the numerous innovations she has helped guide."

When she joined the Administrative Office as an attorney in its executive division in 1997, the Illinois Supreme Court was one of only two states that failed to have any public presence on the web. During her tenure as Director, she helped grow its technological and digital presence to the extent that now all oral arguments in the Court are available via video and audio, usually the

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same day they are heard. The audio of all Appellate Court arguments are also available on the Web. And under her direction, the Illinois Supreme Court was one of the first to use Twitter to publicize announcements, orders and its opinions.

She helped guide the court-ordered establishment of mandatory legal education for all lawyers and judges in Illinois, oversaw the development of extensive educational programs for all judges in the state, and helped develop new standards and programs to enhance judicial performance.

“Her accomplishments are many and they will continue as she begins her new judicial career,” said Chief Justice Kilbride. “She has served for one of the longest periods as administrative director, and her departure marks a loss of institutional history.”

Former Chief Justice Robert R. Thomas also had words of praise.

"During my term as Chief Justice, I worked closely with Cynthia on an almost daily basis," Justice Thomas said. "She's smart, she's accomplished, and she will make an outstanding Circuit judge.

"The judges of this state certainly owe her a debt of gratitude. For nearly a decade, she's been a tireless and aggressive advocate for the Illinois courts. Cynthia is never content with the status quo. Whether it's courtroom technology or the delivery of child welfare services, she's always looking for ways to improve and streamline the system."

Ms. Cobbs joined the Administrative Office after serving as law clerk and chief law clerk to Justice Charles E. Freeman from 1989 to 1997. Within two years, she was elevated to Chief Legal Counsel for the Administrative Office under former Director Joseph A. Schillaci.

When Mr. Schillaci resigned, Ms. Cobbs became director March 1, 2002. Only the late Roy O. Gulley had served longer in the position, from 1969 to 1985.

Ms. Cobbs received her juris doctor degree from IIT—Chicago Kent College of Law in 1988. She holds a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Maryland and worked for several years in Maryland in a clinical setting helping abused and neglected children. She earned her baccalaureate degree from Morgan State University in 1972.

In February, the Chicago Bar Association honored Ms. Cobbs with the Earl Burris Dickerson Award.

“It has been my great honor to serve the Supreme Court of Illinois and to head the Court’s Administrative Office,” said Ms. Cobbs. “It has been a rewarding experience, and I look forward to new challenges and the next steps in my professional career.”

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The Supreme Court named Michael J. Tardy, executive assistant under Ms. Cobbs, to become Acting Director of the Administrative Office, effective immediately.

Mr. Tardy has served in both clinical and administrative positions within the Illinois judicial branch for the past 31 years. He initially worked for the Circuit Court of Cook County Social Service Department, which is the court agency charged with providing community-based supervision for adult misdemeanor and DUI offenders in Cook County.

In addition to the direct delivery of offender supervision and rehabilitation services, he also served in various administrative capacities, including that of district supervisor for four of the Social Service Department's offices.

Mr. Tardy's tenure with the Administrative Office began in 1988 when he joined the Probation Services Division. In 1996, he was appointed to serve as the Associate Director of that division. In 2002, Mr. Tardy was appointed as the Executive Assistant to Director Cobbs.

Mr. Tardy earned his bachelor's degree from DePaul University and a master's degree in Clinical Social Work from the University of Illinois at Chicago. For the past 10 years, he has served as a part-time faculty member at Loyola University in the Criminal Justice Department.

Mr. Tardy extended his sincere appreciation for the support and dedicated service of Director Cobbs.

"The Administrative Office, its staff and all who have worked with the Director have greatly benefitted from her committed leadership," he said.

The Administrative Director is a constitutionally created office to aid the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice in fulfilling their administrative duties.

Among other things, the Administrative Office conducts the election process for the appointment and reappointment of Associate judges, provides support services to the Court's Committees and the Judicial Conference, develops the judicial branch budget, provides legislative support services to the Court, collects and publishes statistical information on court caseloads and case flow, assists in the development and oversight of the Court's Comprehensive Judicial Education Plan, provides technology and information services to the Supreme and Appellate Courts, maintains the Court's website, develops and monitors probation programs for the Circuit Courts, and is responsible for administering particular Supreme Court rules. The Administrative Director also serves as secretary to the Illinois Courts Commission.