



NEWS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Joseph A. Zayas
Chief Administrative Judge**

**Contact:
Al Baker, Communications Director
Arlene Hackel
(212) 428-2500
publicinformation@nycourts.gov
www.nycourts.gov/press**

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Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson Appoints Co-Chairs to Courts' ADR Advisory Committee, Chief Administrative Judge Joseph A. Zayas Announces New ADR Rules

Efforts Aimed at Enhancing Alternative Dispute Resolution Services Statewide

NEW YORK—Chief Judge Rowan D. Wilson today announced the appointment of Westchester County Supreme Court Justice Doris M. Gonzalez and Onondaga County Supreme Court Justice Joseph E. Lamendola as Judicial Co-Chairs of the Statewide Advisory Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution, an expert group of judges, court staff, lawyers, ADR practitioners, and academics charged with examining the range of ADR services available within the court system and making recommendations for their improvement and expansion. Along with Committee Chair John S. Kiernan, a retired litigation partner at Debevoise & Plimpton LLC, Justices Gonzalez and Lamendola will lead the Committee in its study of mediation, neutral evaluation, arbitration, Community Dispute Resolution Centers, and other alternative ways by which people can peacefully resolve conflicts and disputes without a trial, working with the Office of Court Administration's (OCA) Division of ADR and the court system's stakeholders to enhance court-affiliated ADR services and extend their use, as appropriate.

“Justices Gonzalez and Lamendola are visionary leaders who fully appreciate and understand the vital role of ADR in the administration of justice, each having been instrumental in the delivery and oversight of ADR services and resources in their respective jurisdictions that have resulted both in greater operational efficiency and more meaningful justice,” said Chief Judge Wilson. “I am eager to work with them, the outstanding John Kiernan, and our dedicated Advisory Committee members, along with the courts' Division of ADR and numerous justice partners. Together, we will build upon our existing ADR programs—including further expanding free and affordable ADR services in a wide range of civil and family matters for New Yorkers in need—and institute the best ADR practices systemwide.”

“The Advisory Committee has made significant strides under John Kiernan and, with the addition of Justices Gonzalez and Lamendola at its helm, will further advance its mission,” said Chief Administrative Judge Zayas. “Judicial Co-Chairs Gonzalez and Lamendola are highly accomplished, well-respected members of New York’s bench, both widely recognized for their advocacy of the use of ADR in appropriate cases. I look forward to the Committee’s achievements under their and John Kiernan’s collaborative leadership.”

Additionally, Chief Administrative Judge Zayas announced the adoption of Part 160 of the Rules of the Chief Administrative Judge, which provides for a more comprehensive framework to improve parties’ access to alternatives to litigation in civil and family matters as early as possible in the case. [Part 160](#) requires state-funded courts of the Unified Court System to refer civil disputes as early as practicable to an appropriate ADR process, unless certain circumstances preclude the referral; requires screening for intimate partner violence; provides for confidentiality of court-referred ADR, with limited exceptions; guides mediators on court rosters through [Standards of Conduct for Mediators](#); and calls for the creation of local rules.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as Co-Chair and congratulate Justice Lamendola. As a proponent of ADR, I have attended many ADR training programs offered by the courts to effectively help resolve cases throughout the years. I look forward to collaborating with the members of the Advisory Committee to continue to advance the use of mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution,” said Justice Gonzalez. “I thank Chief Judge Wilson, Chief Administrative Judge Zayas, and all who recommended me for the appointment.”

“I am honored and grateful to serve as Co-Chair of the ADR Advisory Committee. I look forward to working collaboratively with my fellow committee members to promote effective conflict resolution strategies and advocate for fairness and justice,” said Justice Lamendola. “I would especially like to thank Chief Judge Wilson and Chief Administrative Judge Zayas, who were instrumental in recommending me for the appointment. Finally, I would also like to congratulate my colleague and Co-Chair, Justice Gonzalez.”

“By naming these terrific judges—who are committed and thoughtful supporters of ADR—to co-chair the ADR Advisory Committee, Chief Judge Wilson has amplified the effort to expand the use of court-sponsored ADR to achieve faster, more efficient, and less expensive resolutions. These appointments are sure to benefit parties in disputes and to advance the delivery of justice,” said John Kiernan.

“The ADR Division is excited to work with Justice Gonzalez and Justice Lamendola, John Kiernan, and the Statewide ADR Advisory Committee to make mediation and other ADR options more accessible to the public. We are grateful to the current ADR Advisory Committee members for their ongoing support as we strengthen existing ADR infrastructure and develop new programs,” said Lisa Courtney, director of OCA’s Division of ADR.

Justice Doris M. Gonzalez presently sits in Westchester County Supreme Court, presiding over the Foreclosure Settlement Conference Part and Child Victims Act cases. Previously, from January 2019 to December 2023, she served as Administrative Judge in Bronx County Supreme Court's Civil Term, where, among other accomplishments, she instituted a program for early referrals to court-sponsored ADR for most civil cases and established the Court's ADR Department, which now has an ADR coordinator each for civil and matrimonial cases. She was elected to State Supreme Court, Bronx County in 2016, and initially assigned to the Civil Term's Special Trial Part, conferencing and mediating all post note of issue cases before sending them out for jury selection. She first ascended to New York's bench upon her election in 2007 to the New York City Civil Court. She was assigned to the New York City Criminal Court in Bronx County, where she served until 2013. She was named an Acting Supreme Court Justice, presiding in Bronx County Supreme Court's Criminal Term from 2010 to 2013, before being assigned to the Bronx County Supreme Court-Civil Term, where she handled matrimonial matters and later was assigned an array of civil cases. She first joined the Unified Court System in 2005 as a principal court attorney. She began her legal career as a law clerk for Lawlor & Caulfield, Esqs., and was subsequently employed by several law firms, first as a trial attorney and then as a senior trial attorney.

Justice Gonzalez is a graduate of Fordham University and the City University of New York Law School at Queens College. She is an adjunct professor at Monroe College of Criminal and Social Justice in the Bronx, where she teaches classes in criminal justice. She is a certified mediator and has handled over 1,500 mediations since 2019, helping resolve hundreds of cases during the pandemic.

Justice Lamendola was elected to the New York State Supreme Court in Central New York's Fifth Judicial District in 2019 and presides over matters in the District's Commercial Division which, handling complex business disputes, regularly incorporates the use of ADR. He also served as an Acting Village Court Justice for the Village of Canton (from 2000 to 2005). Upon graduation from law school, he received an officer's commission, serving as a staff judge advocate in the U. S. Air Force from 1984 to 1988. After completing his active duty commission, he transferred to the New York Air National Guard, where he continued to serve, first with the 174th Attack Wing in Syracuse and later with Headquarters NYANG in Latham, holding the rank of full Colonel at his 2014 retirement.

He began his civilian legal career in the Dutchess County District Attorney's Office in 1988, where he served as a senior assistant district attorney. He was appointed the Corporation Counsel for the City of Syracuse, serving in that role from 1995 to 1999. Justice Lamendola also maintained his own law practice, with an emphasis on family law, business litigation, estate planning, education law, and military law. In addition, he served as general counsel to the Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association from 2009 to 2019, representing public education unions and school administrators in contract negotiations, grievances, and unfair labor practices before the New York State Public Employment Relations Board. He also was as an external director with the Veterans Legal Clinic at Syracuse University College of Law, providing legal counsel to veterans, and a volunteer arbitrator for the Fifth Judicial District's

Attorney-Client Fee Dispute Resolution Program. He is a former chair of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department's Grievance Committee and former co-chair of the Fifth Judicial District's Gender Bias-Gender Fairness Committee, among his other professional activities and affiliations. Justice Lamendola earned a B.A. from SUNY Plattsburgh, an LL.B. from Cardiff University, and an LL.M. from Tulane Law School.

The appointments are effective immediately.

In announcing the new ADR rules, Chief Administrative Judge Zayas added, "I am grateful to John Kiernan and the Advisory Committee members, who called for the creation of these rules, which provide a much-needed framework for alternative dispute resolution in the trial courts, marking an important step in formalizing court-sponsored ADR services, ensuring best practices, and effectively addressing the court system's local needs."

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