



# New Year, New Chief

By Edward A. Hutton III

**H**appy New Year! A new year brings with it an opportunity to reflect on the past year and optimism for what lies ahead. The transition from one year to the next is also often a line of demarcation for change. Such is the case for Michigan chief judges. They are appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court and serve two-year terms. Each term starts on January 1.

The Hon. Linda S. Hallmark was appointed as the chief judge of the Oakland County Probate Court by the Michigan Supreme Court, for the fourth time in her career. Judge Hallmark's first appointment as chief judge came only three years after she was appointed to the Oakland County Probate Court by the governor in 1997. Prior to becoming a judge, Judge Hallmark served as an Oakland County Circuit Court referee for 17 years. The probate court is very fortunate to have a chief judge with such a vast amount of experience.

Michigan Court Rule 8.110, titled "Chief Judge Rule," lists the "Duties and Powers of Chief Judge." There are more duties and powers than I can list, but some of the interesting ones include the following: 1) to represent the court in its relations with the Supreme Court, other courts, other agencies of government, the bar, the general public,

and the news media, and in ceremonial functions; 2) the administration of the court, including having administrative superintending power and control over the judges of the court and all court personnel; and 3) unless such judges are named by the Supreme Court, to select a chief judge pro tempore and a presiding judge of any division of the trial court.

Judge Hallmark selected the Hon. Kathleen Ryan to serve as chief judge pro tempore. Judge Ryan served as the chief judge of probate for two consecutive terms from 2018 through 2021. Judge Ryan was elected to the Oakland County Probate Court on November 2, 2010. She is also an MPJA board of directors member at large and a presenter, editor, and author for ICLE, *LACHES*, *MJI*, and MPJA. She was also the OCBA's Bench/Bar Conference probate chairperson in 2013 and 2015.

Judge Hallmark selected the Hon. Jennifer Callaghan to serve as the presiding judge of adult and minor guardianships and conservatorships, and of the Mental Health unit. Judge Callaghan is our newest judge, having been elected to the Oakland County Probate Court in 2016. She served as the presiding judge of estates and trusts from 2018 through 2021. Judge Callaghan was an

assistant attorney general at the Michigan Department of Attorney General from 2000 to 2004.

Last, but certainly not least, the Hon. Daniel A. O'Brien was selected by our new chief judge to serve as presiding judge of estates and trusts. Judge O'Brien was elected as an Oakland County Probate Court judge in 2008. He served as the presiding judge of adult and minor guardianships and conservatorships, and of the Mental Health unit, from 2018 through 2021. Judge O'Brien was an Oakland County magistrate in the 52-2 District Court in Clarkston from 2001 to 2008 and was an assistant Oakland County prosecutor from 1991 to 1995.

Congratulations to Judge Hallmark for her appointment and to the other judges for being selected to serve on the probate court leadership team. I'd also like to extend congratulations to the Hon. Jeffery Matis, who was appointed as chief judge of the Oakland County Circuit Court, and to the Hon. Joseph Fabrizio, who was appointed as chief judge of the 52nd District Court. <sup>42</sup>

*Edward A. Hutton III is Oakland County Probate Court administrator.*



Hon. Linda S. Hallmark



Hon. Kathleen Ryan



Hon. Jennifer Callaghan



Hon. Daniel A. O'Brien