

# NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

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## **Judge Maria Elena Cruz Appointed to Presiding Judge for Yuma County**

PHOENIX – The Arizona Supreme Court has appointed Maria Elena Cruz to the post of Presiding Judge for Yuma County. On March 25, she will succeed Presiding Judge John Nelson, who is retiring. The Presiding Judge has administrative authority over all courts, judicial officers, and court employees in Yuma County.

Judge Cruz has been a Yuma County Superior Court judge since January 2009 and is now assigned to criminal and domestic relations cases. Before joining the Superior Court, she served as a judge for the Cocopah Indian Tribe, a Deputy County Attorney, and a Deputy Legal Defender, and she worked in private practice as a lawyer. Judge Cruz will serve as Presiding Judge until June 30, 2019.

“My colleagues and I were impressed with Judge Cruz’s efforts to improve the administration of justice and to serve her community. She has taken on leadership roles and actively participated in various court committees, and she is highly respected by those who have worked with her in legal and non-legal settings,” Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice Scott Bales said. “These are qualities that make a good leader and I am confident she will serve Yuma County well in her new role.”

Judge Cruz serves on the Supreme Court’s Commission on Access to Justice and Commission on Victims in the Courts. She formerly served on a Supreme Court workgroup on the Code of Judicial Conduct and is a past president of the Arizona Judges’ Association.

Presiding Judges in Arizona take on extra duties and serve as the chief executive officer of the courts in the county, overseeing all aspects of court business, including financial management. The Presiding Judge oversees case assignments and helps set the court calendar. They also monitor the performance of the courts to ensure that cases are processed in a timely manner. Judge Cruz will receive no additional compensation for her duties and responsibilities as Presiding Judge.

Judge Cruz is a graduate of Arizona Western College, and the University of Arizona where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and her law degree from the University's James E. Rogers College of Law.

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