

# NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

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## **Judge Robert J. Higgins Appointed to Presiding Judge for Navajo County**

PHOENIX – The Arizona Supreme Court has appointed Robert J. Higgins to the post of Presiding Judge for Navajo County. On January 1, 2017, he will succeed Presiding Judge Michala Ruechel, who will remain on the bench. The Presiding Judge has administrative authority over all courts, judicial officers, and court employees in Navajo County.

Judge Higgins has served the Superior Courts in Navajo County since his appointment to the bench in February 2012. Later that year, the people of Navajo County elected Judge Higgins to continue serving as their judge. Judge Higgins will serve as Presiding Judge until December 31, 2019.

“I am honored to be chosen by the Supreme Court as Presiding Judge. Judge Ruechel has served the people of Navajo County well these past eight years and I look forward to carrying on that tradition,” Judge Higgins explained. “My priorities will be to establish a full time court in south county to better serve the people there and to work on a more efficient case management system.”

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 Higgins will receive no additional compensation for his duties and responsibilities as Presiding Judge.

Before joining the Superior Court, Judge Higgins was in private practice handling civil and criminal cases. He was a deputy county attorney in his first role as a public servant. However, the law was not Judge Higgins' initial career path. He was an English teacher at Brophy College Preparatory for seven years prior to attending law school. He earned his undergraduate degree from Santa Clara University (1980), and received a Master's degree from Arizona State University (1988). He graduated from Santa Clara University Law School in 1992.

Judge Higgins demonstrated his enduring commitment to education when he founded the St. Anthony School in 1997, where he continues to serve as a Board member. Additionally, Judge Higgins is a volunteer with the White Mountain Tuition Support Foundation, for which he currently serves as President. He also has volunteered with St. Francis Parish on the White Mountain Apache Reservation, and has worked on several pro bono cases for White Mountain Apaches.

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