

# SUPREME COURT

Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush  
Indiana Supreme Court  
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Indianapolis, IN 46204-2732



# OF INDIANA

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July 9, 2020

The Honorable Eric J. Holcomb  
Governor of Indiana  
200 W. Washington Street  
Room 206, Statehouse  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Holcomb:

The Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission met on Wednesday, July 1, 2020, and selected a panel of nominees for the vacancy on the Court of Appeals of Indiana, First District, that will be created when Judge John G. Baker retires. On behalf of the Commission, I am submitting to you the three candidates the Commission nominated as the most highly qualified: Judge Lakshmi Y. Reddy, Vigo Superior Court; Ms. Lisa G. Reger of New Albany; and Ms. Leanna K. Weissmann of Lawrenceburg.

In selecting these candidates, the Commission considered all information pertinent to the non-exclusive statutory factors: legal education and honors; legal writing; reputation and experience in the practice of law; physical condition and health; financial interests; and public service activities, writings, speeches, and contributions to improve the administration of justice.

With this letter we are forwarding to your office the nominees' complete applications and letters of recommendation. As required by statute and on the Commission's behalf, I offer the following evaluations of each candidate's qualifications.

### **Vigo Superior Court Judge Lakshmi Y. Reddy**

Throughout her career, Lakshmi "Lucky" Reddy has steadily built a reputation of a strong work ethic as a servant leader, resulting in intelligent, thoughtful, and thorough decisions. One prominent jurist relayed an account when, as a law clerk, she was given an assignment, researched the law, and came to a different conclusion than where the Court was headed. After Lakshmi Reddy made several gentle but unsuccessful attempts to convince the jurist of her position, he suggested that she draft an opinion for the result that she believed the law directed. She returned with a well-written, 75-page draft opinion that not only convinced the jurist but a majority of the Court. He succinctly noted that Lucky

Reddy is smart, persuasive, strong, and decisive. Legal commentators and community leaders echo this sentiment and add that she brings compassion to her decision making.

Lakshmi Reddy earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology from Vanderbilt University and graduated *cum laude* from the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis. During law school, she served as a Notes Development Editor on the *Indiana Law Review*.

Following graduation, Lakshmi Reddy served as a judicial law clerk for Indiana Supreme Court Justice Frank Sullivan. She then joined Ziegler Cohen & Koch from 1998 to 2003, practicing in the areas of medical malpractice and insurance defense. From 2003 to 2007, she was an associate at Cox, Zwerner, Gambill & Sullivan, LLP, handling business and real estate transactions, insurance defense, civil litigation, banking, contracts, and probate. In 2007, she founded Shepherd Jones & Reddy, LLC, an all-women law firm practicing business and health care law.

She opened the Reddy Law Firm, LLC in 2009, concentrating on business law, real estate, family law, and estate planning and probate. In 2015, Lakshmi Reddy was elected Judge of Vigo County Superior Court 2. Her docket primarily consists of family law, mental health, torts, civil plenary, probate, collections, mortgage foreclosures, and protective orders. In 2017 and 2018, she served as Chief Judge of the Vigo Circuit and Superior Courts.

As an attorney, Lakshmi Reddy participated in two or three jury trials involving medical malpractice and insurance defense and in several bench trials on probate, family law, small claims, and tort matters. As a judge, she has presided over thirteen jury trials and numerous bench trials on matters ranging from small claims, probate, and real estate cases to complicated divorce and custody matters.

Her commitment to improving the administration of justice can be seen in her myriad efforts to more effectively address issues affecting family law cases, to increase legal access for individuals with language barriers, and to enhance diversity in the profession. Immediately after taking the bench, Judge Reddy recognized the need to obtain funding for programs for divorcing families who cannot afford beneficial services, and she began collaborating with other stakeholders to meet these needs. Some of her successful efforts include securing a grant for low-cost mediation services, obtaining another grant (from the Wabash Valley Community Foundation) to improve supervised visitation, and working with the District 10 Pro Bono Program to obtain monies to provide *pro bono* legal assistance on family law cases. She also took the lead in drafting Vigo County's Alternative Dispute Resolution Plan, and she collaborated with an educator at the Purdue Extension in Vigo County to offer parenting classes. Judge Reddy currently serves on the Indiana Supreme Court Family Law Task Force.

In 2017, Judge Reddy was appointed by the Indiana Supreme Court as co-chair of the Advisory Task Force for Language Access, which was charged with making findings

and recommendations for providing effective language access in Indiana courts. Judge Reddy assisted in the preparation and presentation of a detailed, statewide Language Access Plan (LAP) to the Indiana Judicial Conference Board of Directors in April 2019. The Board unanimously approved the Plan. Judge Reddy continues to serve on the subsequently created Language Access Advisory Committee, which is working to develop a template for local court systems to use to create their own LAPs. The Committee also is planning to prepare short, public videos explaining the availability of court interpreters and encouraging qualified individuals to consider a career in court interpretation.

Her efforts to enhance diversity in the profession include her activities as a member of the Indiana Supreme Court's Race and Gender Fairness Commission. She has participated in various public forums organized by the Commission to gain insight regarding citizen perceptions of Indiana's judicial system. And she currently serves on a subcommittee that is concentrating on creating programming for school-age children to encourage women and minorities to choose careers in the legal and judicial professions. She is a board member and past-vice president of the Indiana Chapter of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association and a current member, past executive board member, and past secretary of the India Association of Terre Haute.

Lakshmi Reddy is a member of the Indiana Judges Association, the Terre Haute Bar Association, and Drug Free Vigo County (an organization dedicated to raising awareness and advocating drug prevention). She also is a board member of ReThink, an organization committed to recycling and sustainability. Her past board memberships include service on the boards of the Wabash Valley Community Foundation, the Vigo County Education Foundation, the Indiana Small Business Development Center, the Estate Planning Council of Central Illiana, St. Mary of the Woods College, and the Council on Domestic Abuse. She is a former member of the Indiana State Bar Association, 100+ Women Who Care (a charitable organization raising monies for other nonprofits), and the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce, which awarded the Reddy Law Firm in 2010 with Small Business of the Year.

Judge Reddy regularly speaks to area schools and has conducted mock trials to teach elementary children about the American system of jurisprudence. She also frequently speaks to audiences about judicial ethics and previously taught advanced legal writing to paralegal students. While Chief Judge of the Vigo County Court system, she spearheaded the drafting and adoption of a local rule on court security and obtained additional funding from the Vigo County Council to increase security for the Juvenile and IV-D Courts.

In her spare time, Lakshmi Reddy enjoys attending football and basketball games, watching movies, and reading books.

### **Lisa G. Reger, Esq.**

As a small-town practitioner and part-time judicial officer, Lisa Reger values the importance of community and has developed a reputation as the "go-to person" for answers

to unusual legal questions and for innovative thought. One legal contemporary remarked, “She has managed to rise to the very top of a confrontational, contentious practice area without the slightest dent in her ethical reputation. In my dealings with Lisa I have found that her word is her bond and her principles are inviolate.” The Commission repeatedly heard similar remarks from other attorneys, community leaders, and judges who noted that her temperament and people skills are well-suited for the Court of Appeals.

Lisa Reger earned academic and creative writing scholarships to attend Indiana State University in Terre Haute, graduating *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science in Health and Safety and Secondary Education. She obtained her law degree from Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis. During law school, she earned the Dean Benjamin F. Small Fellowship Award and Scholarship and obtained the Top Paper in Oil and Gas Law.

While attending law school, Lisa Reger served as a judicial law clerk for Hamilton County Court Judge Donald E. Foulke. Upon graduation, she worked as an associate attorney at Lorch & Naville (now Lorch Naville Ward, LLC) in New Albany, becoming a partner in 1999. Early in her legal career, Lisa Reger concentrated on estate planning and administration, but she also worked on various civil litigation cases. Her current legal practice focuses on family law and adoptions. Since 2002, Lisa Reger has been a family law mediator on numerous complex matters, and she frequently serves as a *pro bono* or reduced-rate mediator for *pro se* litigants through the Clark County Program. She also has served as a parenting coordinator in high-conflict family law cases in which parents need assistance to resolve parenting disputes.

In addition to her private practice, Lisa Reger was a part-time public defender in Floyd County Court (now Floyd Superior Court) from 1998 to 2003, handling low-level felony and misdemeanor cases. She has been appointed as guardian *ad litem* for children or incapacitated adults in Floyd, Clark, Orange, Washington, and Scott Counties. Since 2014, she also has served as a part-time referee in Harrison Circuit Court, presiding over juvenile and Title IV-D child support matters; and she has served as a judge *pro tempore* for Harrison, Clark, and Floyd counties.

Her trial experience includes litigating a significant amount of bench trials as an attorney and presiding over numerous bench trials as a judicial officer. She also participated in the preparation of civil cases scheduled for jury trial that ultimately settled prior to trial.

Her commitment to improving the administration of justice includes dedicating hundreds of hours towards *pro bono* legal work. Her law firm received the Pro Bono Publico Award from the Indiana Bar Foundation in 1999. Lisa Reger also has volunteered her time on “Talk to a Lawyer Day” and assisted at legal help clinics to provide legal aid to those who cannot afford an attorney. Lisa Reger was nominated in 2007 for the “Gutsy Gal Award” by Today’s Woman Magazine in recognition of her assistance to the community. That same year, she was featured on the magazine cover, with an article

highlighting her legal and mediation practice. In 2012, when a tornado hit the small community of Henryville, Indiana, she volunteered her time to meet with residents who needed legal assistance in the aftermath. For her efforts, she received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Clark County Commissioners.

Lisa Reger's dedication to her community can also be seen in her other charitable activities, such as volunteering at soup kitchens and homeless shelters through the Southern Indiana Homeless Coalition. She also has devoted her time to area schools in numerous ways: serving as the Providence High School's soccer team manager for four years, volunteering with the school's theatre program for eight years (including hosting German theatre students at her home), and giving speeches to schoolchildren on Constitution Day to explain the purpose of the three branches of government.

Lisa Reger is a Fellow of the Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys (AAAA), which is a collective of attorneys who have extensive experience in adoption law or assisted reproduction. She is a Certified Family Law Specialist by the Family Law Certification Board and now serves as a board member for the organization. Since 2002, she has been a registered family law mediator and currently is a member of the Indiana State Bar Association, the Floyd County Bar Association, the Clark County Bar Association, and the Sherman Minton Inns of Court. Lisa Reger is a past secretary, vice president, and president of the Southern Indiana Estate Planning Council and previously served on the board of directors of Our Place Drug and Alcohol Services. Previously, she taught business law as an adjunct professor at Indiana University Southeast in New Albany.

In her spare time, Lisa Reger likes to read, jog, practice yoga, dance, and hike. She is an amateur painter and sketcher and particularly likes to do renditions of the Lady of Justice statue.

### **Leanna K. Weissmann, Esq.**

When one thinks of Leanna Weissmann, images immediately come to mind of a seasoned and effective appellate advocate who has left her mark on the law. Nominating Commission members learned that she has an even greater commitment to improving legal access by providing pro bono assistance to the disadvantaged. In a handwritten letter, one former client who was facing loss of child custody wrote, "I am so amazed at the fact that money was not a factor in helping me and making me the number one priority. She filed everything within a day of receiving my case. Leanna eased my concerns and helped me when all was lost. She was my light in such a dark time in my life." The Commission believes Leanna Weissmann would bring a similar dedication if selected to the Court of Appeals.

Leanna Weissmann graduated *cum laude* from Indiana University with dual Bachelor of Arts degrees in Journalism and English. As an undergraduate, she received the Indiana University alumni scholarship and the Louis B. Edwards Award of Excellence

in Journalism. She earned her law degree from Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis, graduating *cum laude*.

During law school, Leanna Weissmann clerked for a solo practitioner who handled civil litigation and family law cases. Upon graduation, she worked as an appellate law clerk for Justice Robert D. Rucker (then Judge for the Court of Appeals of Indiana). Following her clerkship, Leanna Weissmann shared office space from 1996 to 1999 with another solo practitioner in Ohio County, maintaining a general practice in which she handled civil, bankruptcy, divorce, criminal defense, and real estate matters. She also served as a part-time public defender for Ohio County.

Leanna Weissmann has continued working as a solo practitioner since 1999, representing criminal defendants and civil litigants in appellate litigation, with filed briefs in more than 400 appeals and over 20 oral arguments to her credit. In 2018, she participated in successfully petitioning the United States Supreme Court to grant certiorari in *Zanders v. Indiana*, 138 S.Ct. 2702 (2018), a case involving a complex Fourth Amendment issue. Other successful appeals led to revisions in a patterned jury instruction, new standards in evaluating the protected person statute, and new guidelines for submission of timely appeals. In her solo practice, Leanna Weissmann also has drafted wills and powers of attorney for individuals on a *pro bono* basis and operated a *pro bono* appellate program through <https://www.hoosierappeals.com/>.

In addition to her private practice, Leanna Weissmann served from 2000 to 2006 as a part-time judicial referee for Dearborn Superior Court 1, presiding over tenancy claims, small claims disputes, *pro se* civil trials, and initial hearings on criminal cases. In 2006, she was appointed by Governor Mitch Daniels as Trustee on the board of the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI). She served in that capacity through 2008, helping to administer federal grant funds for criminal justice programs. During her tenure on the board, the trustees were called upon to navigate the difficult decision to fire the Executive Director of ICJI after a probe into missing funds.

Her trial experience as an attorney includes three felony jury trials and hundreds of bench trials in the areas of collections, personal injury, custody issues, and real estate property boundaries. Leanna Weissmann has also presided as a hearing officer over two attorney reinstatement cases.

Besides her *pro bono* and appellate work, Leanna Weissmann's efforts to improve the administration of justice include serving as an appellate advocate for Indiana's Juvenile Defense Project, a program aimed at improving access to justice for juveniles facing potential incarceration. This year, Leanna Weissmann authored the article, *An Independent Judiciary, The Shield of a Free Society*, published in the American Bar Association Council of Appellate Lawyers' newsletter *Appellate Issues*. She has been a member of the Indiana Supreme Court Disciplinary Commission since 2013, and, while chair of the Commission, she contributed to and organized the Commission's first ethics advisory opinion. In 2017,

she was named a Fellow by the Indiana Bar Foundation for her efforts with the economically disadvantaged.

Leanna Weissmann also has sought to improve the legal profession through her activities and memberships in the Indiana State Bar Association (ISBA), currently serving as the 1st District Representative for the Appellate Practice Section and past-chair of the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee; the National Counsel of Law Disciplinary Board (NCLDB), the National Organization of Bar Counsel (NOBC), and the Dearborn/Ohio County Bar Association. In 2018, she participated in the Indiana State Bar Association's Legal Conclave, which focused on issues such as access to justice and legal advertising. Recently, she began working with the ISBA about presenting a future program for new law graduates interested in opening a law practice after she recognized a particular need in this area. Leanna Weissmann is a frequent speaker and facilitator for the Public Defender Council, has presented for the NCLDB, and is an adjunct professor at Ivy Tech Community College.

Her dedication to the community can be seen in actions such as her decision to become a certified literacy instructor while attending law school. As a literacy instructor, she tutored an elderly man whose goal was to be able to read storybooks to his grandchildren, after having quit school in the fifth grade to help support his family as a sharecropper. One year under her tutelage, Leanna's student achieved his goal. From 2014 to 2017, Leanna Weissmann mentored a young woman through the Cincinnati Big Brothers/Sisters Program, and she created and maintained from 2010 to 2016 an internet Christian outreach program for "tween" girls. She regularly speaks and volunteers at area schools and her church and is a lifetime member of the Girl Scouts and the Indiana University Alumni Association.

In her spare time, Leanna Weissmann likes to read, write poetry, listen to podcasts, meditate, and teach aerobics. She enjoys running and recently finished her fourteenth half marathon.

I would be pleased to discuss any of these candidates with you in greater detail. I am confident that you will conclude that all three nominees are of a high caliber and would be a lasting credit to the Court of Appeals of Indiana.

Sincerely,



Loretta H. Rush