



Office of Governor Mark Dayton

Governor Mark Dayton's Judicial Appointments

Since taking office in 2011, Governor Mark Dayton has made six appointments to the Minnesota Supreme Court. Governor Dayton has consistently used the judicial commission process to carefully and transparently evaluate the qualifications of candidates for judicial service, including Minnesota's highest court. In the course of making these appointments, Governor Dayton has prioritized candidates with the highest qualifications, firm understandings of our state and its people, and steadfast commitments to public service.

Our justice system works best when all Minnesotans have confidence in it. That is why Governor Dayton also has worked to craft a judiciary that reflects our state's rich diversity and ensure that Minnesotans of all backgrounds are fairly represented. Under the Governor's leadership, racial diversity in the judiciary has improved by 98 percent and gender balance has improved by 35 percent. Governor Dayton's appointment of Justice Anne McKeig also created the first female-majority on the Minnesota Supreme Court since 1991.

More information about each of Governor Dayton's six appointments to the Minnesota Supreme Court are below. In addition, more information about Governor Dayton's work to improve the diversity of Minnesota's Judicial Branch is included below.

Governor Dayton's Appointees to the Minnesota Supreme Court

- [Paul C. Thissen](#). Governor Dayton appointed Paul C. Thissen to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2018. Justice Thissen was Senior Counsel of the Health Law Group at the Ballard Spahr Law Firm (formerly Lindquist & Vennum). He served in the Minnesota State Representatives from 2003 to 2018. During his time in the House of Representatives, Thissen served as Speaker of the House and Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thissen was also a Shareholder at Briggs and Morgan, an Appellate Public Defender, and a Law Clerk for the Honorable James B. Loken at the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. Justice Thissen earned his B.A. from Harvard University and his J.D. from the University of Chicago.
- [Anne K. McKeig](#). Governor Dayton appointed Anne K. McKeig to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2016. Justice McKeig was previously appointed to serve as a district court judge in the Fourth Judicial District in 2008. Previously, she worked as an Assistant Hennepin County Attorney in the Child Protection Division for over 16 years, where she specialized in Indian Child Welfare cases. Justice McKeig earned her B.S. from the College of St. Catherine and her J.D. from Hamline University School of Law (now Mitchell Hamline).
- [Margaret H. Chutich](#). Governor Dayton appointed Margaret H. Chutich to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2016. Justice Chutich was previously appointed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals in 2012. Prior to her appointments, she served as Assistant Dean at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs, as Deputy Attorney General of the Law

Enforcement Section with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, and as an Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Minnesota. Justice Chutich earned her B.A. from the University of Minnesota and her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School.

- [Natalie E. Hudson](#). Governor Dayton appointed Natalie E. Hudson to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2015. Justice Hudson was previously appointed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals in 2002. Prior to her appointment to the Court of Appeals, Justice Hudson served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Minnesota in the Criminal Appeals and Health Licensing Divisions. Justice Hudson earned her B.A. from Arizona State University and her J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School, where she also served as the Editor-in-Chief for the school's newspaper.
- [David L. Lillehaug](#). Governor Dayton appointed David L. Lillehaug to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2013. Justice Lillehaug previously served as a former United States Attorney from 1994 to 1998. He also was an officer and shareholder with Fredrikson & Byron, P.A. Active in pro-bono work, Justice Lillehaug's 35-year litigation practice focused on public law and complex cases, with a particular emphasis on state and federal constitutional issues. Justice Lillehaug earned his B.A. summa cum laude from Augustana College and his J.D. from Harvard Law School.
- [Wilhelmina M. Wright](#). Governor Dayton appointed Wilhelmina M. Wright to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 2012. Justice Wright's appointment to serve as a Federal District Court Judge for the District of Minnesota was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2016. She previously served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota, where she represented the United States in cases relating to economic fraud and violent crimes. She also worked as an attorney with Hogan & Hartson, LLP, and as a trial judge on the Ramsey County District Court. Justice Wright earned her B.A. from Yale University and her J.D. from Harvard Law School.

A Judiciary that Reflects Minnesota's Rich Diversity

Since 2011, Governor Dayton has appointed 154 new judges to fill vacancies in Minnesota's ten judicial districts, the Court of Appeals, and the Minnesota Supreme Court. In making these appointments, Governor Dayton has been mindful of improving diversity on the bench – helping ensure that the state's judges better-reflect the cultural, racial, and gender diversity of the Minnesotans they serve. Those intentional efforts have greatly improved diversity in Minnesota's Judicial Branch.

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| 99 percent | Governor Dayton has increased the racial diversity of Minnesota's judges by 98.5 percent. |
| 82 percent | Governor Dayton has appointed 82 percent of all Hispanic judges in Minnesota (9 of 11 judges). |
| 37 percent | Governor Dayton has increased the proportion of female judges in Minnesota by 37 percent. |
| 78 percent | Governor Dayton has increased the proportion of female judges in Greater Minnesota by 78 percent. |

Notable Firsts Governor Dayton appointed Minnesota's first [Hispanic appellate court judge](#), [African American female Supreme Court justice](#), and [Native American Supreme Court Justice](#).

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