



COURT CONNECTION

News and Views from the Cobb Probate Court



Chief Judge Kelli L. Wolk

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

The Legislative Session is back in full swing. While I try to stay up on the happenings down at the Gold Dome, I try to stay out of the way. There are some matters impacting our class of court that are of interest. I am not attempting to persuade, but only to inform here, so please don't shoot the messenger if you have feelings.

➤ **HB 180** attempts to make *qualification* for Article VI judges match the *requirements* to serve as an Article VI Probate Judge. Currently, all probate judges have to sign an affidavit as part of qualifying as a candidate for probate judge. The affidavit sets the requirements for all probate judges across the state – minimum age of 25, residency requirement, etc. There is no specific affidavit when the person is seeking election to an Article VI Court. In those cases, the candidate must be a licensed attorney for the required period of time, attained the age of 30, etc. but can swear to the less restrictive credentials at qualifying. HB 180 bill simply attempts to align the requirements with the qualification paperwork.

➤ **HB 36** is a bill seeking to expand the list of professionals authorized to perform evaluations in adult guardianship and/or conservatorship cases. The unfortunate truth is that there are counties without qualified evaluators available within or surrounding the county. Some courts are known to require petitioners to identify an evaluator to perform the independent evaluation of a proposed ward. Here in Cobb County, with a population of nearly 800,000 people, we only have 4 court appointed evaluators. So this is an effort to reflect the current state of medical care in Georgia and allow for additional professionals to serve.

There is also legislation proposed that seeks to make all Georgia Probate and Magistrate judges nonpartisan. This is different than previously passed local legislation around many metro counties (including Cobb) and beyond that made those local positions nonpartisan (over time since the mid-1980s). This is an effort to make all judges non-partisan and was mentioned by Justice Boggs in his state of the Judiciary address to the General Assembly. As always, the legislative session is a time of constant change. We will try to update you with anything that makes it through and impacts our court.



EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENTS TO KICK OFF YOUR 2025!



NEW SIMPLIFIED PROBATE COURT FEE STRUCTURE HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED



FEE REDUCTION FOR NEW WEAPONS CARRY LICENSE APPLICATIONS



NEW COMPLIANCE FORMS & INSTRUCTIONS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE



2025 PROCESS SERVER LIST NOW AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE

Congratulations

Employee of the Quarter Award

KRISTIN COSTELLO



Kristin Costello works in the Estates Division as a Processing Clerk. She has been with the Probate Court for 2.5 years.

Kristin was chosen for the award for her dedication to teamwork and for her help in ensuring that her co-workers' files are tended to while they are absent so that the Court is able to minimize delays as much as possible. She has also made herself available to clerks to answer questions when supervisors are unavailable, and has truly embodied the spirit of cooperation. Her efforts are much appreciated!

Beyond The BENCH



Three members of the Cobb Probate Judicial staff volunteered in the Georgia High School Mock Trial competition held in the Cobb County State Court building on Saturday, February 1.



Hearing Officer Carlos Vilela organized the entire event with State Court Judges Ashley Palmer and Eric Brewton. Our very own Judge Tara Riddle participated as a Judge in the competition and Hearing Officer Stephanie Carman participated as an evaluator.



(Beyond The Bench cont.)

In the competition, students undertake the roles of attorneys and witnesses in a court case. Professional attorneys and judges serve as the presiding judges and juror/evaluators in competition rounds. Teams are evaluated on their ability to make a logical, cohesive and persuasive presentation, rather than on the legal merits of the case.

Employee Spotlight



Kristin Scott
ESTATES DIVISION MANAGER

Kristin Scott has worked in the Probate Court since 2002. She began as a part-time clerk and moved into a full-time position as soon as one became available. In March 2018, Kristin was promoted to Estates Division Supervisor, and in 2022, received a promotion to her current position as Estates Division Manager.

She was recently selected to be a part of the County's EXCEL 2025 class, which is an executive development program designed for Cobb supervisory and management personnel. You won't see her much because she is typically behind the scenes ensuring the office is running efficiently and effectively.

In her current role, Kristin oversees both the Estates and the License Divisions. She oversees hiring, creates training materials, administers staff trainings and conducts weekly staff meetings. Kristin's responsibilities also include reviewing files for accuracy, completeness and readiness before they are sent to the judicial staff for their final review.

As you can see, Kristin plays a vital role in our organization's operational structure. We are extremely fortunate to have someone with her extensive probate experience as a part of the leadership team.



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