



COURT CONNECTION

News and Views from the Cobb Probate Court



ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END...

We just wish THIS ending wasn't happening so soon! Jennifer Ritchey, Chief Clerk for the Cobb Probate Court, will be retiring on September 30, 2025 after a **REMARKABLE 29 YEARS** with the Probate Court.

Jennifer started in the Probate Court as a part-time employee then went on to become a full-time processing clerk in the

Estates Division. Jennifer was promoted after six years and became the judicial assistant to Judge David Dodd. She remained the assistant for 10 years and was then was promoted to her current position as Chief Clerk.

"It has been an absolute pleasure to work for the Cobb Probate Court. I am extremely grateful for the trust and confidence placed upon me and also for the ability to serve in many different roles within the Court. I will forever be grateful for the opportunities and experiences I have gained during my time here," stated Ritchey.

Jennifer is looking forward to spending time with her family and two adorable grandbabies. Traveling is also on the docket for Jennifer, as she is planning to go on many road trips in her new found free time.



Jennifer Ritchey
CHIEF CLERK



Chief Judge Kelli L. Wolk

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

Summer is a busy time with vacations, camps, and new legislation. This year, we have HB 36 taking effect. This, primarily, expands the list of potential license classes in Georgia who can support guardianship/conservatorship petitions or perform independent evaluations. The Court has experienced a (pleasantly) surprising amount of interest in the lead up to July 1. Also, HB 327 went into effect that same day. This new bill makes several key changes, including procedural adjustments, an expansion of jurisdiction, and a cleanup of existing regulations. So, join me for some light summer reading.

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ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END... (CONT.)

"It's hard to imagine this place without Jennifer", stated Judge Wolk. She continued, "Jennifer was pivotal during the case management system process and has left some incredibly big shoes to fill."

Kristin Scott, Division Manager, is certainly up for the challenge and will do a wonderful job as the newly appointed Chief Clerk.

Jennifer has requested no retirement party, so we plan to honor her privately within the office before she leaves. If you happen to see Jennifer before her last day, please be sure to take a moment to congratulate



Kristin Scott - L
Jennifer Ritchey - R

and thank her for her longstanding service to the citizens of Cobb County. She has most certainly left this place better than she found it, and we are thankful for her commitment to the Cobb Probate Court. We will all miss you, Jennifer. Best wishes for a wonderful retirement. You have certainly earned it!

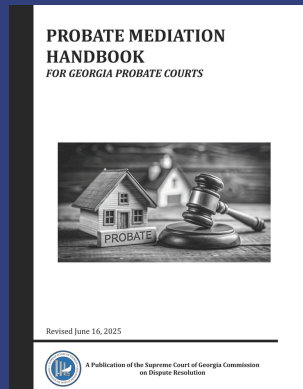


Probate Court has outgrown its current space and recently acquired the area of the basement vacated by the Accountability Courts and Drug Lab. Demolition began in early July with phase 1 plans to be completed by December of this year.

Phase 1 of construction includes relocating the current clerk's office to the basement and adding a training and break room for staff. The next phase will involve relocating the License Department from the atrium into a newly designed intake area that will include both the License and Estate Intake Clerks. Future phases of the construction will include adding a third courtroom and creating a more functional working area for Probate Court staff.

PROBATE MEDIATION HANDBOOK

NEW!



The Supreme Court of Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution recently released the Probate Mediation Handbook for Georgia Probate Courts, which offers comprehensive guidance on incorporating mediation into probate practice. The handbook is available digitally at this

stage and will be updated periodically. To access the most current version, visit the following link: [Probate Court Mediation Handbook](#). Chief Judge Wolk and Judge Riddle were instrumental in developing the training for Probate Mediators that will be used throughout the State.



Congratulations

Employee of the Quarter Award

KAILYN ASKINS



Congratulations to Kailyn Askins, who was chosen as the recipient of the Employee of the Quarter Award. Kailyn has consistently demonstrated outstanding dedication, a strong work ethic, and a positive attitude. Whether it's taking initiative, supporting colleagues, or delivering high-quality results, she has truly set an example of excellence. Please join us in congratulating her!

Beyond The BENCH



Chief Judge Kelli Wolk and Judge Kristin Poland were invited to be guests on **the Good Judge-ment Podcast**. The podcast, hosted by Georgia Judges J. Wade Padgett (GA Court of Appeals) and Tain Kell (Cobb Circuit), provides continuing education and other matters of interest to

Georgia judges. Judge Wolk and Judge Poland were invited on the podcast to discuss Guardianships and Conservatorships, along with new legislation that began July 1st allowing additional classifications of medical professionals to be appointed to perform evaluations.



Judge Wolk and Judge Riddle were asked to speak at the Solo Small Firm Section of the Cobb Bar. The judges discussed probate law and how it intersects with other areas of law.



Judge Wolk was invited to speak at the North Cobb Senior Center regarding probate court and its processes. Judge Wolk discussed general practices surrounding wills, powers of attorney and advanced directives, along with other processes such as guardianships and conservatorships.



Judge Wolk and Judge Poland were asked by the Licensed Professional Counselors Association of Georgia to lead trainings for LPCs throughout the state to educate them on the evaluation process in response to the recent legislative change expanding classifications of medical professionals to perform evaluations in adult guardianship and conservatorship proceedings.



Judge Kristin Poland

Judge Kristin Poland was appointed to another term for the Georgia Bar Journal Editorial Board on which she has served since 2014. The editorial board is responsible for editing the scholarly legal articles published in each edition of the Georgia Bar Journal, as well as conducting the annual Fiction Writing Contest, and choosing and editing the winning story.