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GOVERNOR PATAKI ANNOUNCES MEMBERS OF THE STATE JUDICIAL SCREENING COMMITTEE, MAKES THREE JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Governor George E. Pataki today announced the membership of the State Judicial Screening Committee, ensuring only the highest caliber candidates are recommended to become judges of the Court of Claims.

In addition, Governor Pataki announced the designation of Nicholas Colabella as an Additional Justice to the Appellate Division of the First Department. The Governor also nominated Mark C. Dillon to serve on an interim basis as Judge of the Westchester County Court, and Russell P. Buscaglia as Judge of the Court of Claims, which will require Senate Confirmation. These individuals were previously screened and found highly qualified by the Temporary Judicial Screening Committee.

"The State Judicial Screening Committee will ensure that the highest quality appointments will be made," Governor Pataki said. "Decisions by our courts in criminal and civil cases have profound consequences for all New Yorkers, and we need to have confidence in the integrity of the judicial process."

The 13-member committee consists of the Counsel to the Governor, the Chairperson of each of the four Departmental Judicial Screening Committees and two members of each of the four Departmental Judicial Screening Committees.

The Governor has appointed the following individuals:

Michael Finnegan, Counsel to the Governor, will serve as the Chairman of the committee.

James F. Gill, of Rockville Centre, who is the designee of the Governor as Chairman of the First Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1956 and is a managing partner in the law firm of Robinson Silverman Pearce Aronson & Berman LLP. Mr. Gill served as a member of Mayor Koch's Judicial Screening Committee from

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1981 until 1990. He was the Chairman of the Long Island Power Authority from 1995 to 1996. In addition, he is the Chairman of Battery Park City Authority. Mr. Gill is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross and Fordham University School of Law.

Claire P. Gutekunst, of New York, who is the designee of Chief Judge Judith Kaye for the First Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1984 and has been a partner in the law firm of Proskauer Rose Goetz & Mendelsohn since 1991. Ms. Gutekunst is the Chairperson of the firm's Alternative Dispute and Resolution Committee and the Chairperson of the New York State Bar Association's Strategic Planning Advisory Committee. In addition, she was the prior Chairperson of the New York State Bar Association's Committee on Women and the Law and a member of the Governor's Temporary Judicial Screening Committee. Ms. Gutekunst is a graduate of Brown University and Yale Law School.

Charles E. Dorkey, III, of New York, who is the designee of Attorney General Dennis C. Vacco for the First Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1975 and has been a partner in the law firm Haythe & Curley since 1992. Mr. Dorkey is a member of the firm's Executive Committee and is head of the Litigation Department. In addition, he serves on the New York Panel of Distinguished Neutrals for the Center for Public Resources and is an approved mediator for the Southern District of New York. Mr. Dorkey is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the University of Pennsylvania.

Kevin J. Plunkett, of Tarrytown, who is the designee of the Governor as Chairman of the Second Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1975 and has been a partner in the law firm of Plunkett & Jaffe since 1979. Mr. Plunkett is a member of the board of trustees of Iona College and serves on numerous other community and professional boards. He is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross and Stinson University.

Patricia P. Wright, of Freeport, who is the designee of the Governor to the Second Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law as an Assistant District Attorney in the Nassau County District Attorney's Office since 1994. Ms. Wright served as manager of the Community Legal Assistance Corporation of Hempstead from 1984 until 1990. She is a graduate of Hofstra University.

Phillip M. Damashek, of Chappaqua, who is the designee of the Speaker of the Assembly Sheldon Silver and the Senate Minority Leader Martin Connor to the Second Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1969 and has been a partner in the law firm of Schneider, Kleinik, Weitz, Damashek & Shoot since 1979. Mr. Damashek is a member of the Committee on Case Management of the Office of Court Administration, the director and vice president for government relations of the Respect for Law

Alliance and a member of the board of Trustees of New York Law School. In addition, he served as the past president of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association. Mr. Damashek is a graduate of the University of Miami.

John J. Clynne, of Delmar, who is the Governor's designee as Chairman of the Third Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1953. Judge Clynne served as Albany County Attorney from 1964 until 1972 and as an Albany County Judge from 1974 until 1984. In addition, he is a trustee of the Albany Law School. Judge Clynne is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross and Albany Law School.

James B. Crane, II, of Loudonville, who is the designee of the Temporary President of the Senate Joseph Bruno and the Assembly Minority Leader Thomas Reynolds to the Third Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1984 and has been a partner in the law firm of Crane, Kelley, Greene & Parente since 1993. Mr. Crane has served on the Alumni board of trustees of Albany Law School, the board of trustees of the Child Hospital Foundation and the Albany League of Arts. He is a graduate of the State University of New York at Albany and Albany Law School.

John R. Dunne, of Spencertown, who is the designee of the New York State Bar Association to the Third Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1955 and is counsel to Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna. In addition, Mr. Dunne is a director of the Committee for Modern Courts, of the Capital Defenders Office of New York State, director of the Prisoners' Legal Services of New York and also serves on numerous other professional and community boards. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and Yale Law School.

John C. Cirando, of Syracuse, who is the designee of the Governor as Chairman of the Fourth Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1966 and is a partner in the law firm of D.J. & J.A. Cirando. Mr. Cirando served as the former president of the board of directors of Vera House Shelter for Battered Women and is serving on the board of trustees of the Leukemia Society of Central New York. He is a graduate of St. Bonaventure and the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Law.

John C. Cherundolo, of Syracuse, who is the designee of the Governor to the Fourth Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1973 and has been a partner in the law firm of Cherundolo, Bottar & McGowan since 1983. Mr. Cherundolo is the president-elect of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association, dean of the New York State Trial Lawyers Institute, coordinator for Trial Lawyers for Public Service, and serves on numerous other professional and community boards. He is a graduate of Syracuse University.

Maryann Saccomando Freedman, of Buffalo, who is the designee of the Governor to the Fourth Department's Departmental Judicial Screening Committee, has been engaged in the practice of law since 1959. Ms. Freedman was the first woman to become president of the Erie County Bar Association in 1981 and the New York State Bar Association in 1987. In addition, she has held numerous leadership positions in civic and professional organizations. She is a graduate of the University of Buffalo.

The Governor's judicial appointees announced today are:

Justice Colabella, of Bedford, who has been engaged in the practice of law since 1964. From 1964 to 1982, he was in private practice in the Eastchester area. Since 1983 Judge Colabella has served as a Justice in the Supreme Court of the State of New York. Judge Colabella received a bachelor's degree from New York University in 1959 and his law degree from Albany Law School in 1962;

Justice Mark C. Dillon, of Yorktown Heights, who has been engaged in the practice of law since 1985. Justice Dillon has served as Town Justice for the town of Yorktown since 1988 and has been engaged in private practice with the law firm of Ceruzzi & Spring in the White Plains area. He served as an Assistant District Attorney in Westchester County from 1985 until 1987. Justice Dillon received his bachelor's degree from Colgate University in 1981 and his law degree from Fordham Law School in 1984, and;

Russell P. Buscaglia, of Tonawanda, who has been engaged in the practice of law since 1975. He has served as an Assistant Attorney General of New York State since 1995. Mr. Buscaglia was engaged in the private practice of law in the Buffalo area from 1975 until 1977. He served as an Assistant District Attorney in Erie County from 1977 to 1989 and as an Assistant United States Attorney in Buffalo from 1989 to 1995. Mr. Buscaglia received his bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1972 and his law degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Law in 1975.

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