



News Release

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Vance Hagins Named Chief of Judiciary Pretrial Services Unit

Vance Hagins has been named chief of the New Jersey Judiciary's new Pretrial Services Unit, effective Nov. 14, Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, has announced.

"We are pleased that Vance has decided to accept this significant challenge to guide the Judiciary as we move with our partners in the other branches of government toward criminal justice reform," Judge Grant said.

As head of the Pretrial Services Unit, Hagins will be responsible for the development and oversight of a landmark criminal justice reform initiative. In January 2017, the state will shift to a system in which judges rely on objective factors so that a defendant's release is based on the threat posed to the community and not on the ability to pay bail.

The changes stem from a committee formed and chaired by Chief Justice Stuart Rabner. The committee made recommendations that led to the passage of legislation and a voter-approved constitutional amendment last year.

"Implementation of criminal justice reform represents a historic shift in the way our courts administer justice," Rabner said. "With Vance's background, and the continued cooperation of other key stakeholders in government, I am confident we will successfully achieve the goal of developing a fairer and safer criminal justice system for New Jersey."

A major part of the criminal justice reform initiative involves establishing a Pretrial Services Unit in each of the state's 15 vicinages, to be coordinated centrally at the Administrative Office of the Courts. Staff in each unit will be trained to administer a comprehensive, evidence-based electronic risk assessment tool to assess the risk that a defendant will engage in violence, commit a new crime, or fail to appear for future court events. Unit staff will inform judges of the results and supervise defendants who are released pending trial.

A graduate of Rutgers University and Rutgers School of Law-Camden, Hagins has worked for the Judiciary since December 1988, first as a legal technician and then as lead attorney on the Death Penalty Proportionality Review Project. He also has worked as an attorney and assistant chief of the criminal division's legal unit.

Hagins has staffed a number of Supreme Court committees, including the Model Criminal Jury Charge Committee, the Capital Cause Committee and the Criminal Practice Committee, and Supreme Court Special Committees on the Recordation of Custodial Interrogations, Telephonic and Electronic Search Warrants, Discovery in Criminal and Quasi-Criminal Cases, and the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice. He has also been the division's lead trainer on jail credit since 1993.

"I am honored and excited to have been selected to take on this important job, and I look forward to working with my colleagues throughout the state to make criminal justice reform a reality," Hagins said.

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