

## **HISTORY-MAKING APPOINTMENTS TO THE BENCH**

Our Supreme Court, for the first time in its history, has a female majority and a person of color on the bench. Governor Gina M. Raimondo in December 2020 nominated attorney Erin Lynch Prata and Superior Court Associate Justice Melissa A. Long to fill vacancies on the high court after the 2020 retirements of Justices Gilbert V. Indeglia and Francis X. Flaherty. Justice Lynch Prata was sworn into office on January 4 in a WebEx session by Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell. Justice Long was sworn in a public ceremony on January 11, 2021 on the State House steps by Chief Justice Suttell. In remarks at the ceremony, Chief Justice Suttell noted that Justice Long's elevation changed the racial makeup of the court and that along with Justice Lynch Prata altered the gender makeup as well as a generational change. Justice Long also is the chair of the Supreme Court's new Committee on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts, which is examining how litigants of all walks of life are treated in the court system.

Governor Raimondo also appointed the first Latina to the Family Court, Associate Justice Elizabeth Ortiz, who was sworn by Chief Judge Michael B. Forte on December 28, 2020. Attorney Linda Rekas Sloan, the first Asian-American appointed to the courts, was sworn on January 28, 2021 as an Associate Justice of the Superior Court by Presiding Justice Alice B. Gibney. Two other appointments that occurred at the same time included Superior Court Magistrate Richard D. Raspallo, who was elevated to Associate Justice by Governor Raimondo and sworn in by Presiding Justice Gibney on January 11, 2021, and Kevin Reall, appointed to the Workers' Compensation Court as an Associate Judge, who was sworn on January 4, 2021.