

News **Judges**

Senate Confirms New Judges for Sussex, Monmouth Courts

February 25, 2025 By  **Colleen Murphy**



New Jersey Statehouse in Trenton. Courtesy of Wikimedia

The New Jersey Senate confirmed three nominees to the state Superior Court including a career prosecutor, a partner with Greenbaum Rowe Smith & Davis, and a lawyer from a Freehold family law practice.

The Senate Judiciary Committee met Tuesday morning to advance three New Jersey Superior Court nominees: Brent M. Rafuse of the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, Jeanette Russell of Greenbaum Rowe in Red Bank, and Claire Scully of Scully Family Law in Freehold. Shortly after the three unanimously advanced out of committee, the Senate confirmed the nominees Tuesday afternoon in a 39-0 floor vote.

Greenbaum Rowe's Russell is headed to the Monmouth County Superior Court, where she will replace retired Judge Angela White Dalton. Russell practiced family law for the firm and was a member of the New Jersey State Bar Association Family Law Section Executive Committee.

"I thank my law firm, Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith & Davis, not only for their support but for allowing me the opportunity to practice with some of the most talented lawyers and litigators in the business," Russell said.

Russell holds an undergraduate degree from Manhattanville University and a J.D. from Pace University School of Law.

Rafuse is slated to serve on the Sussex County Superior Court bench, replacing retired Judge Michael C. Gaus. The nominee is a graduate of Rutgers University in New Brunswick and Widener University's Delaware Law School. After obtaining his J.D., Rafuse worked for Porfido Law Offices and then joined the Morris County Prosecutor's Office. He later moved to Sussex County, where he rose to the position of supervising assistant prosecutor.

"It is the pinnacle of my career to be nominated to this position," Rafuse said.

Sen. Anthony M. Bucco, R-Morris, congratulated Rafuse on his nomination and said he is a highly regarded candidate for his roles in the prosecutor's offices.

Scully was before the committee to replace Judge David Bauman on the Monmouth County Superior Court. In addition to practicing family law, Scully has served on the committee and as chair of the District IX Ethics Committee.

Scully took her time before the committee to thank her special needs son who was born severely disabled, according to her law firm bio.

"Without ever uttering a word in his entire life, he taught me to confront any challenge head-on, to navigate the way through to a solution, to understand the boundaries of the solution, but never give up on the possibility of finding a better one," Scully said.

Sen. Vin Gopal, a Monmouth County Democrat, spoke on Scully's nomination and noted her dedication to Monmouth County and that she would be a valuable addition to the Superior Court bench.

After attending both Hofstra University and Emory University as an undergraduate, Scully earned her J.D. from Touro University Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center.

The latest numbers from the Administrative Office of the Courts confirmed that the total number of Superior Court vacancies after today's confirmations in the state sits at 42. Mercer County continues to experience the highest number of open seats on the bench, with seven vacancies. Essex and Passaic are close behind, with six openings. Union and Camden each have five vacancies, while Middlesex has three. Bergen, Burlington, Gloucester, Ocean and Somerset have two. There are no open seats in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Hudson, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Morris, Salem, Sussex and Warren counties.

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