

JPEC Adds Four Commissioners

Salt Lake City, August 21, 2018—The Utah Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC) announces the addition of four new commissioners: Aden Batar, retired Supreme Court Justice Christine M. Durham, Blair Hodson, and Bridget K. Romano.

“We are pleased to welcome our new commissioners as they join our efforts. Each of them brings demonstrated commitment to Utah communities and diverse backgrounds of experience and service, making them valuable additions to our Commission,” said David Roth, Chair of JPEC.

Aden Batar is director of immigration and refugee resettlement at Catholic Community Services of Utah. Mr. Batar has received various accolades for his contributions and his commitment to serving Utah’s immigrant and refugee populations, including the 2018 New Pioneer award from the Salt Lake Chamber, and the Gandhi Peace Award from the Utah Gandhi Alliance for Peace in 2017. He serves on the University of Utah alumni board, Refugee Service Office advisory board, and is a member of Welcoming Salt Lake’s New Americans Task Force. Mr. Batar’s appointment is by the Utah State Senate.

Christine Durham was the first woman appointed to Utah’s Supreme Court, where she served as a Justice for over 30 years, including service as Chief Justice, before retiring in 2017. Among her many service contributions, she is past-president of the Conference of Chief Justices of the United States and has served on the American Bar Association’s Council on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. Justice Durham’s work in judicial education and efforts to improve the administration of justice have been recognized nationally. She is a recipient of the 2007 William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, and the 2008 “Transparent Courthouse” Award from the Institute for the Advancement of the Legal System (IAALS) at the University of Denver. Justice Durham’s appointment is by the Utah Supreme Court.

Blair Hodson is executive director of the Rocky Mountain Innocence Center. He has over 10 years of nonprofit experience in operations and development, and has a particular interest in the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships between the private and nonprofit sectors. Mr. Hodson's appointment is by the Utah Supreme Court.

Bridget Romano is Assistant Division Administrator in the Salt Lake County District Attorney’s Civil Division, where her focus is civil litigation. Prior to joining the Salt Lake County District Attorney’s Office, she served as Chief Civil Deputy and Solicitor General in the Utah Attorney General’s Office. Ms. Romano has served as chair of the Utah State Bar’s Appellate Practice Section and is on the Utah Supreme Court’s Advisory Committee on the Rules of Appellate Procedure. Ms. Romano’s appointment is by Governor Gary R. Herbert.

The new commissioners join the independent, 13-member JPEC, established by the Utah Legislature in 2008. JPEC collects and disseminates information about the performance of all judges in Utah. The legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government each appoint several commissioners to JPEC. No more than half of the commissioners may be attorneys, and no more than half may belong to the same political party.

JPEC evaluates judges so Utah voters may make informed decisions about retaining a judge in office. Judges also use the evaluation results to improve their performance. JPEC supports quality judging by promoting public accountability of judges while ensuring that the judiciary remains an independent branch of government. In 2016, IAALS affirmed, “Utah’s independent and innovative judicial performance evaluation process is a national model of excellence.” More information about JPEC is available at <https://judges.utah.gov/>.

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