

From: Coriell, Scott [Scott.Coriell@vermont.gov]
Sent: Monday, January 04, 2016 10:00 AM
To: Coriell, Scott
Subject: Gov. Shumlin Appoints Four New Judges
Attachments: John Pacht.jpg; Mary Morrissey.jpg; Michael Harris.jpg; Michael Kainen.jpg

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 4, 2015

Gov. Shumlin Appoints Four New Judges

John Pacht, Mary Morrissey, Michael Kainen, and Michael Harris Appointed Trial Judges

MONTPELIER – Gov. Peter Shumlin announced four judicial appointments today. Burlington attorney John Pacht will fill a judgeship recently funded to help address increasing caseloads related to child protection and opiate-abuse across Vermont. Chittenden County Deputy State's Attorney Mary Morrissey will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Michael Kupersmith. Windsor County State's Attorney Michael Kainen will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge John Wesley. And Burlington attorney Michael Harris will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Amy Davenport.

John Pacht

Pacht is a founding partner of the law firm Hoff Curtis in Burlington. He has over thirty years of experience, with a background in criminal, civil, and family law. Pacht has served as defense counsel in numerous high-profile criminal cases, including death penalty cases in federal court. He has also handled complex civil fraud cases, personal injury cases, family court matters, and has served as a mediator. Pacht is a member of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, a founding member and past-president of the Vermont Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and a past member of the Vermont Association for Justice.

Pacht graduated from Hofstra University School of Law in Hempstead, NY, where he was Managing Editor of the Hofstra Law Review. He also graduated from Antioch College. Prior to moving to Vermont, he clerked for the Hon. Frederick B. Lacey of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. He also worked in New York City in private practice and as both a federal and New York public defender. He and his wife live in Hinesburg, and have three adult children and three grandchildren.

"John is a supremely capable lawyer and one of the best respected criminal defense attorneys in the State," said Gov. Shumlin. "John's deep and broad experience with both the law and the human condition will serve the Vermont's legal system very well."

Mary Morrissey

Morrissey is currently the Chief Deputy State's Attorney of Major Crimes at the Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office. She oversees investigations and prosecutions of major crimes, and has served as the primary liaison of the State's Attorney's Office to the courts as well as local police. Morrissey has prosecuted numerous complex criminal cases over the course of her career, including homicides and sexual assaults, and has overseen the Juvenile Court docket. She has been involved in the development and implementation of various alternative criminal justice programs, including the Rapid Intervention Community Court as well as Driver Restoration Day in Chittenden County. She presently serves on the Policy Board for the Chittenden Unit Special Investigations and on the Vermont Children's Justice Act Task Force.

Morrissey, her husband, and their three children live in Jericho, where Morrissey grew up. She graduated from St. Michael's College in Colchester the Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord, NH.

"Mary brings a genuine passion for the day-in, day-out of the work of our courts, as well as innovative and thoughtful approaches to criminal justice. She has a well-earned reputation as one of the best prosecutors in our state and I am confident she will make an excellent judge," said Gov. Shumlin.

Michael Kainen

Prior to his current post as Windsor County State's Attorney, Kainen was a Deputy State's Attorney in Orange County. He was previously in private practice, focusing on civil litigation and criminal defense, while also sitting as acting district judge in Orange and Windsor Counties. He was Executive Director of the Vermont Sentencing Commission, and served in the House of Representatives for eight years as a member of the Judiciary Committee. Since leaving the legislature and the Sentencing Commission, Kainen has continued to be involved in criminal justice policy reform efforts, including pre-trial services legislation and by hosting a driver restoration day in Windsor County.

Michael and his wife live in Hartford and have three children; they also served as licensed foster parents from 1995 to 2000 for children from distressed families. Kainen received his J.D. and Masters in Legal Studies ([cum laude](#)) from Vermont Law School.

"Michael is a proven public servant known for his common sense and consensus building. In addition to his mastery of the law, Michael can truly meet people where they are. His legal knowledge, people skills, and commitment to improving Vermont's legal system make him a valued addition to the Vermont bench," said Gov. Shumlin.

Michael Harris

Harris is a partner at the Burlington law firm of Collins, McMahon & Harris. His practice has focused on civil litigation, including employment law, personal injury claims, construction law, business litigation, debt collection, real estate, product liability, and consumer law claims. Harris has been an in private practice in Burlington since 1987, and previously worked at Paul Frank &

Collins. He is a long-standing member of the Williston Conservation Commission, and has frequented the Civil Division of the Chittenden Superior Court as an acting judge.

Harris is a graduate of Middlebury College (cum laude) and the University of Wisconsin Law School (magna cum laude). He clerked for the Hon. Albert W. Coffrin III of the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont. Harris is a member and past president of the Vermont Association for Justice and a member of the Vermont Employment Lawyers Association. He and his wife live in Williston and have three adult children who live in Vermont.

“Michael is well-regarded for the selfless commitment he brings to all of his work, from his legal clients and associations, to his volunteer work in his community and in our court system,” said Gov. Shumlin. “Michael’s even-temperament and strong work ethic will serve him and our judiciary very well.”

Courtesy photos of each of the four judicial appointees are attached.

###







