



Supreme Court of Illinois

November 19, 2024

ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF COLMAN AND KILBRIDE AWARDS

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice (ATJ Commission) announced today the winners of two awards, the Jeffrey D. Colman Access to Justice Award and The Hon. Thomas L. Kilbride (Ret.) Judicial Access to Justice Award. The 2024 recipients are Tiffany Schicker and Judge Thomas More Donnelly. These awards are designed to recognize and celebrate exceptional contributions to increasing access to the court system by improving the experience of litigants.

“The ATJ Commission is thrilled to spotlight the exceptional efforts court stakeholders are making to enhance the court user experience,” said Judge Jorge L. Ortiz, Chair of the ATJ Commission. “The recipients of these awards exemplify the critical impact innovative projects, policies, and partnerships can have advancing the vital goal of increasing access to justice.”

The Jeffrey D. Colman Access to Justice Award is given to a lawyer, paralegal, or court employee who has made a significant or meaningful contribution to improving access to our court system for litigants who are self-represented, limited English proficient, disabled, or otherwise vulnerable. The Hon. Thomas L. Kilbride (Ret.) Judicial Access to Justice Award is given to a member of the judiciary who has made a significant or meaningful contribution to increasing access to the court system by improving the experience of litigants.

The 2024 awardee of the Jeffrey D. Coleman Access to Justice Award is Tiffany Schicker, who serves as the Circuit Clerk of Marion County. In her tenure as Circuit Clerk, Clerk Schicker has led several impactful initiatives, notably securing Access to Justice Improvement grant funds to enhance the courthouse experience. Her efforts have resulted in the installation of public Wi-Fi, the establishment of a comprehensive self-help center equipped with updated technology and signage, and the launch of a text message notification program for court users.

Clerk Schicker is an active member of the Court Navigator Network, where she facilitated a successful site visit for stakeholders from across the state, highlighting her commitment to collaboration and innovation. Her compassionate approach and proactive engagement in various committees, including the ATJ Commission’s Remote Appearance Committee, Forms Committee, and Civil Procedure Forms Subcommittee, are examples of her unwavering dedication to ensuring that self-represented litigants have the resources and support they need to navigate the legal system effectively.

The 2024 awardee of The Hon. Thomas L. Kilbride (Ret.) Judicial Access to Justice Award is Cook County Judge Thomas More Donnelly, who has exemplified exceptional leadership in

assisting self-represented litigants (SRLs) within the Circuit Court of Cook County. His vision and execution have resulted in four game-changing initiatives: the CARPLS (Coordinated Advice & Referral Program for Legal Services) Consumer Collection Self-Help Desk; Chicago Bar Association (CBA) Driver's License Statutory Summary Suspension Pro Bono Attorney Training Program; CBA Municipal Court Pro Bono Panel; and Commercial Calendar pro bono program.

Judge Donnelly has actively advocated for public policy reforms in consumer debt matters, resulting in significant advancements in the fairness and equity of court proceedings. His contributions to the Illinois judicial system have profoundly improved the lives of countless individuals facing financial difficulties and inspired legal professionals to prioritize access to justice. Additionally, Judge Donnelly's dedication to education, his support for SRLs, and his involvement in criminal justice reform initiatives reflect his passion for ensuring justice for all individuals.

A reception to celebrate the awardees will be held in the spring.

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