



# Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

## News

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### **Judge Joanna Tabit appointed to Business Court Division**

For immediate release

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals announced that Chief Justice Menis E. Ketchum has appointed Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Joanna I. Tabit to the state Business Court Division.

“Judge Tabit brings extensive knowledge and experience litigating commercial disputes which will assist greatly in the Division’s goal of providing efficient and just resolution of complex legal claims between businesses,” said Christopher C. Wilkes, Division Chairman and Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit Judge. “I thank Chief Justice Ketchum for this appointment to the panel.”

Effective March 1, Judge Tabit replaced Eleventh Judicial Circuit (Greenbrier and Pocahontas Counties) Judge James J. Rowe, who retired Feb. 29. Her term ends October 9, 2019. Judge Wilkes added, “I would like to thank Judge Rowe for the valuable time and effort he gave not only as a Division Judge but also on the committee that formulated the Division.”

The Business Court is a division within West Virginia’s Judiciary designed to handle complex commercial litigation between businesses.

Trial Court Rule 29.02 calls for the Business Court Division to consist of up to seven active or senior status circuit court judges appointed by the Chief Justice, with the approval of the Supreme Court of Appeals. Each appointment is for a term of seven years. Three judges were appointed in 2012 when the Division was founded, and another four have been added as the Division’s workload has increased. Their terms are staggered, and there is no prohibition against serving successive terms, either as judge or as Chairman of the Division.

The other Business Court Division Judges are:

- Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties) Judge Christopher C. Wilkes, the Division Chairman;
- Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit (Hampshire, Hardy and Pendleton Counties) Judge H. Charles Carl, III;
- Seventeenth Judicial Circuit (Monongalia County) Judge Russell M. Clawges, Jr.;
- Fifth Judicial Circuit (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason, and Roane Counties) Judge Thomas C. Evans, III;
- Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) Judge Paul T. Farrell; and

■ Twenty-Fourth Judicial Circuit (Wayne County) Judge James H. Young, Jr.

Judge Tabit is native of Charleston. She earned her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Marshall University in 1983 and a law degree from West Virginia University College of Law in 1986.

She began her legal career in 1986 as a personal law clerk to former Supreme Court Justice Thomas E. McHugh. Following her clerkship, she served as an Assistant and then Deputy Attorney General of the Appellate Division in the Office of the Attorney General from 1989 to 1992 under the administrations of Attorneys General Roger Tompkins and Mario Palumbo. In 1992, Judge Tabit joined the law firm of Steptoe & Johnson PLLC, where she was a member attorney until October 2014, when she was appointed to the bench by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin.

Judge Tabit also has worked as an Adjunct Lecturer teaching Summer Appellate Advocacy at West Virginia University College of Law.

She has served as Co-Chairman of the Campaign for Legal Aid of West Virginia; served on the Board of Directors for the YWCA of Charleston; been chairwoman of the Access to Justice Foundation; served as a member of Board of Governors of the West Virginia State Bar; and served as a Commissioner on the City of Charleston Human Rights Commission. Judge Tabit currently is a member of the Juvenile Justice Commission.

While in private practice, Judge Tabit was rated an AV lawyer by Martindale Hubbell and recognized by Chambers USA as a Leader in the Field with a specialty in commercial litigation. Additionally, she was recognized by The Best Lawyers in America and Super Lawyers in various practice areas. In 2009, Judge Tabit received the "Outstanding Private Practice Attorney" award presented by the Women's Law Caucus at West Virginia University College of Law. She also was recognized as "Charleston's Finest" by the Kentucky/West Virginia chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation for her charitable work for the organization.

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