

### **Chief Justice C. Shannon Bacon**

Justice C. Shannon Bacon was sworn in Wednesday, April 13, 2022 as chief justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court, a position she was chosen for by her colleagues. Justice Bacon was appointed to the New Mexico Supreme Court on January 25, 2019 after being recommended by a nonpartisan Judicial Nominating Commission. She took the oath of office on February 4, 2019. Prior to her appointment, Justice Bacon served as a district court judge on the Second Judicial District Court and as the Presiding Civil Judge. While serving on the district court, Justice Bacon presided over thousands of cases spanning complex civil litigation, class actions, adult guardianship and conservatorship cases, real estate and contract disputes, election issues, domestic and children's court cases, and appeals. Justice Bacon was also the Bernalillo County Water and Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Judge.

Prior to joining the Supreme Court Justice Bacon served on numerous commissions and committees. She served on the New Mexico Supreme Court Adult Guardianship and Conservatorship Steering Committee (Chair) and Rules Committee, the Access to Justice Commission, the Bernalillo County Pro Bono Committee (Co-chair), the Supreme Court Personnel Rules Committee (Chair), the Supreme Court Rules of Evidence Committee (Chair) and the District and Metropolitan Judges Association (President). Justice Bacon has also served on non-profit boards that address the needs of youth experiencing homelessness for more than a decade.

Prior to taking the bench, Justice Bacon was a partner at Sutin, Thayer and Brown, P.A. and Eaves, Bardacke, Baugh, Kierst and Larson, P.A. where her practice focused on complex litigation and appeals. She began her legal career as a law clerk for the Honorable A. Joseph Alarid at the New Mexico Court of Appeals.

Justice Bacon earned a Bachelor's Degree in History and her law degree at Creighton University. Upon completion of her education, Justice Bacon returned to Albuquerque, New Mexico where she was raised, to begin her professional career.

### **Judge Erin B. O'Connell**

Judge O'Connell was appointed to the civil bench in February 2019. She is Co-Chair of the Second Judicial District Court Pro Bono Committee, and is Co-Chair of the New Mexico Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission. Judge O'Connell is committed to facilitating and expanding access to civil legal services to New Mexicans in need across Bernalillo County and the State.

Judge O'Connell graduated from the University of New Mexico School of Law. She was a law clerk for two years for Justice Charles W. Daniels of the New Mexico Supreme Court. Following her clerkship, and until appointed to the bench, she was in private practice as a trial and appellate lawyer. Judge O'Connell is an active supporter of the Second Judicial District Court's judicial clerkship program, which affords law students the opportunity to serve as a law clerk with Judge O'Connell and to experience working with all divisions of the Court.

## **John Arango**

Immediately after graduating from college, I joined the Peace Corps and spent two year in Colombia. I then joined the staff at the University of New Mexico's Peace Corps Training Center for Latin America. That work morphed into the Center on Community Action Services which I founded and directed for three years. After a year as the Special Assistant to the Western Region of the OEO, I spend five years as the County Director of the Peace Corps in Panama (1969) and Ecuador (1970-73).

After a short period as the owner of a store selling handcrafts from Latin America, I became a management consultant to non-profit organizations (1974 to present). Clients were primarily legal aid organizations in all 50 states, plus the American Bar Association and the Legal Services Corporation, although I also worked with arts organizations and private law firms. From 1992 to 2016 I was the lead trainer for all new legal aid Executive Directors.

Currently, I am chair of two New Mexico state commissions: The Developmental Disabilities Council and the Civil Legal Services Commission. I am also a member of the board of the New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool and an ex officio member of the Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission. And I am a member of the board of Chatter, a chamber music organization that, among other activities, performs every Sunday in a former warehouse in downtown Albuquerque.

## **Sovereign Hager**

Ms. Hager has more than 10 years of experience working to advance economic and social justice. In the last five years, as an attorney at the Center, she worked extensively to increase access to public benefits in state and federal court, as well as in community, administrative, and legislative forums. She is an established expert in New Mexico on the complex regulatory framework for public benefits programs, eligibility for families that include immigrants and frequently provides expert testimony to the legislature. Ms. Hager has secured major court victories on behalf of her clients to increase access to food and medical assistance, drivers' licenses, and other programs.

Before joining the Center, Ms. Hager worked for two years on the Navajo Nation for DNA People's Legal Services' Medical Legal Partnership, where she handled a broad range of legal issues impacting the health of patients at an Indian Health Service facility. Her advocacy included public benefits, domestic violence, special education, housing, consumer and workers' rights. Ms. Hager has past advocacy experience working to improve farmworker pay and living conditions and enforcing fair housing laws.

J.D. and MA from Syracuse University in 2011.

## **Heather Norfleet**

Heather Norfleet joined Equal Access for Justice as executive director in 2021. Immediately prior she served as the individual giving manager for Bosque School. Other former positions include development director for Mountain Mahogany Community School; vice president of the National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation; and international account supervisor for DDB Worldwide Marketing in New York. At Equal Access for Justice, she spearheads all fundraising and community-building efforts to increase

resources for civil legal aid organizations, and raise awareness about the critical need for free civil legal services throughout the state.

### **Ben I. Sherman**

Ben Sherman is the founder of Ben Sherman Law LLC, located in Albuquerque. His practice is focused primarily on representing injured workers in workers' compensation cases. Prior to opening his own law firm in 2012, he served as a prosecutor with the 2nd Judicial District Attorney's Office and as an assistant city attorney with the City of Albuquerque's litigation department. Sherman is a proud 2008 graduate of the University of New Mexico School of Law and has been fortunate to practice law in New Mexico for the past fourteen years. A fluent Spanish-speaker, he enjoys representing people from all communities and appreciates New Mexico's unique diversity and rich traditions. Sherman is a past chair of the State Bar of New Mexico Young Lawyers Division and currently serves as an officer on the Alumni Board of the University of New Mexico School of Law. Ben represents the Second Judicial District which includes Bernalillo County.