



16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Missouri  
Jackson County, Missouri

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## News Release

Attorney Kelly Willyard appointed as deputy probate commissioner

Attorney Kelly Willyard has been appointed to the bench as the court's newest deputy probate commissioner. Willyard was appointed to the position on March 4, 2024, by Judge Mark Styles of the Probate Division.

She will fill the vacancy created by the upcoming retirement of Deputy Probate Commissioner Brian Tillema on March 29, 2024.

Willyard is currently an attorney with the law firm of Kirkland Woods & Martinsen. She specializes in probate and trust administration, fiduciary litigation, and establishing guardianships and conservatorships.

"I am pleased to have Kelly Willyard join Division 19 as she has a calm demeanor, is approachable, and has the wisdom and intellect to resolve the complicated issues that come before us," said Styles. "The baby boom generation is bringing us more contested matters that require the skills she will bring to the bench."

Willyard joined Kirkland Woods & Martinsen in 2023. Prior to that she was an attorney with Kennyhertz Perry where she assisted business clients with litigation and transactional matters including complex contract drafting and trademark prosecution. She also regularly accepted ad litem appointments in probate matters pending in Jackson County.

She was an assistant attorney general in the Financial Services Section of the Missouri Attorney General's Office from 2014 – 2022 where her job responsibilities included the protection and recovery of state funds.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English magna cum laude from Colorado State University in 2008, and she graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law in 2013 with honors.

"I would like to thank Deputy Probate Commissioner Brian Tillema for his honorable service to this court as he retires later this month, and am pleased that Kelly Willyard will be joining us shortly thereafter."

Willyard is expected to join the court on April 15, 2024.

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