



16th Judicial Circuit of Missouri

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News Release

Harrell named as 16th Circuit's presiding judge

Judge Kevin D. Harrell became the new presiding judge of the 16th Judicial Circuit of Missouri on January 1, 2025.

Judge Harrell, the first African-American male judge to hold the position, succeeds Judge Jaliliah Otto in the role. Judge Otto, who served from January 2023 to December 2024, was the first African-American judge to be elected to the position of presiding judge in the court's history.

Judge Harrell was elected to the position by his fellow judges at a meeting of the court en banc in December 2023, and he has served the presiding judge-elect during the last year. His term of office is from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026.

The presiding judge oversees the administrative functions of the Court, such as its budget. However, the presiding judge does not supervise his or her judicial colleagues, who act independently within their own divisions.

Judge Harrell joined the bench in 2012 after 15 years with the Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. At the time of his appointment, Judge Harrell was the office's Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. A Kansas City native, he earned his law degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1998.

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