

# Gov. Ron DeSantis Is Remaking Florida's Supreme Court: New Justice Picked

The appointment means that five of the Florida Supreme Court's seven sitting justices are now DeSantis appointees.

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🕒 5 minute read

Judge Meredith L. Sasso, Florida Supreme Court. Courtesy photo

Judges



Lisa Willis

## What You Need to Know

- Sasso is the fourth woman and fourth Hispanic justice to be appointed to the Supreme Court since the Gov. was elected.
- The appointment makes Sasso the 93rd Justice of the Florida Supreme Court filling the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Ricky Polston.
- “The judiciary plays a critical and unique role in our constitutional government, and I am resolutely committed to upholding the rule of law for as long as I am privileged to serve.” -Justice Sasso

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis continues to reshape the Florida Supreme Court with the appointment of Judge Meredith Sasso of Lakeland, who formerly served as chief judge on Florida’s new Sixth District Court of Appeal.

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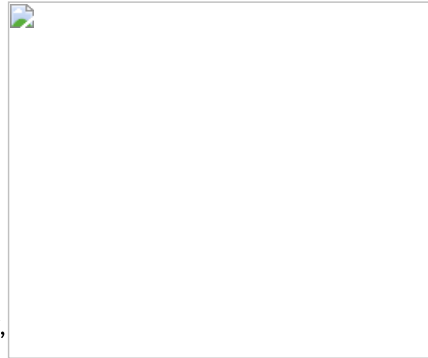
Sasso, a Cuban-American, is the fourth woman and fourth Hispanic justice DeSantis has appointed to the state Supreme Court since he was elected governor in 2019. She also is the seventh woman to serve on the Florida Supreme Court.

For the first time in Florida history, three women will sit on the state Supreme Court.

The appointment means that five of the Supreme Court's seven justices are now DeSantis appointees.

### 'Fidelity to the Constitution'

"I am proud to appoint Judge Meredith Sasso to the Florida Supreme Court, because her fidelity to the Constitution will help preserve freedom in our state for generations to come," DeSantis said. "As a Cuban-American woman who understands the importance of our constitutional system and the rule of law, Judge Sasso will serve our state well."



Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed Judge Meredith Sasso to the Florida Supreme Court on May 23, 2023. Courtesy of the Office of the Governor

Sasso will replace Justice Ricky Polston, who resigned in March.

"I am incredibly honored that Governor Ron DeSantis is entrusting me with this position," Sasso said. "The judiciary plays a critical and unique role in our constitutional government, and I am resolutely committed to upholding the rule of law for as long as I am privileged to serve."

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### 'Ricky Polston is a Good Man': Florida Supreme Court Justice Hangs up his Black Robe

Donna L. Eng, president of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers said it has long been FAWL's mission to promote gender equality and the leadership roles of FAWL's members in the legal profession, judiciary and community.



Donna L. Eng of Mrachek, Fitzgerald,

"I am honored to be serving as the president of FAWL when, for the first time in

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Florida history, three women will be serving on the highest court in the

Rose, Konopka, Thomas & Weiss. Courtesy photo

state,” said the appellate attorney with Mrachek, Fitzgerald, Rose, Konopka, Thomas & Weiss in West Palm Beach. ”FAWL hopes to see even more progress and more appointments of qualified women to the bench at all levels of the judiciary, the legal profession, and in their communities.”

Giselle Gutierrez, shareholder at Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson in Miami and president of the Cuban American Bar Association says the association is proud of the newly appointed Florida Supreme Court Justice.

“Judge Sasso is highly qualified and will be a great asset to the Florida Supreme Court and the State of Florida,” Gutierrez said. “Her appointment is a significant step forward for diversity in the judiciary.”

Gutierrez notes that not only is Sasso Cuban-American, but she is making history as one of three women serving simultaneously on the Florida Supreme Court for the first time in the court’s existence.

“Judge Sasso’s appointment also marks a momentous occasion where four of the seven justices currently serving are of Hispanic heritage,” Gutierrez said. “As one of the largest bar associations in Florida, CABA is committed to increasing diversity in the legal profession and ensuring that all Floridians have access to justice. We look forward to working with the new Justice to uphold the rule of law and protect the rights of all Floridians.”

### **‘Work Ethic, Keen Intellect’**

Judge John Stargel, a jurist who has worked side by side with Sasso since January on Florida’s Sixth District Court of Appeal, said the appointment was no surprise.

“Her work ethic, keen intellect and leadership characteristics will make her a valuable member of this state’s highest court for many years to come,” Stargel said. “I am grateful for her friendship and for her time serving as the initial chief judge of the Sixth District Court of Appeal, as we worked to get this new court up and running.”

Sasso also served on the Fifth District Court of Appeal, after an appointment from Gov. Rick Scott.



Giselle Gutierrez, shareholder Stearns Weaver MillerWeissler Alhadeff & Sitterson in Miami



Judge John K. Stargel of Sixth District Court of Appeal.

Courtesy photo

The judge received her undergraduate degree from the University of Florida in 2005 and her law degree from the University of Florida in 2008, where she was a member of the Justice Campbell Thornal Moot Court Board.

She began her career in private practice, representing clients in large loss general liability, auto negligence, and complex commercial claims in state and federal courts at trial and on appeal.

Sasso also served as a guardian ad litem, representing abused or neglected children.

Prior to serving on the court, Sasso was chief deputy general counsel for Scott. In this role, she represented the Governor's Office in litigation before the Florida Supreme Court, the First District Court of Appeal, and state and federal trial courts, among other duties.

In January 2019, she rose to the Fifth District Court of Appeal.

Sasso was raised in Tallahassee, Florida, and is married with two children. She is an appointed member of the Florida Bar Appellate Court Rules Committee. She is also a member of the American Enterprise Institute Leadership Network and the Federalist Society.

According to the Sixth DCA website, Sasso also led the effort to implement the new law that created the Sixth DCA. She was charged with managing myriad operational and fiscal components necessary to activate and maintain a district court of appeal, including recruiting and hiring employees, overseeing judicial and case management, and the assessment and implementation of technology requirements.

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