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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BENSON ELECTED CHIEF JUDGE

MACOMB, IL — The Ninth Judicial Circuit is pleased to announce that Circuit Judge Heidi A. Benson has been elected by her colleagues to serve as Chief Judge, effective October 1, 2026. Judge Benson succeeds Chief Judge Raymond A. Cavanaugh, who will step down on September 30, 2026, in anticipation of his upcoming retirement from the bench.

Judge Benson's election marks a significant milestone in the circuit's history, as she will become the first female Chief Judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit.

"It is an immense honor to be selected by my colleagues to lead the Ninth Judicial Circuit," stated Judge Benson. "I extend my sincere gratitude to Chief Judge Cavanaugh and former Chief Judge Vancil for their exemplary leadership. Their administrations have instituted significant improvements across our courts, notably establishing and securing ongoing grant funding for Drug Courts in all six counties, as well as advancing initiatives to increase court accessibility for all members of the public. I am committed to maintaining this momentum and building upon the strong foundation they have established."

Judge Benson brings extensive legal and judicial experience to the role. Prior to joining the bench, she was a partner at Flack, McRaven & Stephens in Macomb from 1997 until her appointment as Associate Judge in 2011. In 2016, she made history as the first female Circuit Judge elected in the Ninth Judicial Circuit, a position she has held continuously since.

A native of Stanford, Illinois, and a graduate of Olympia High School, Judge Benson earned her Bachelor of Arts from Knox College in Galesburg in 1994 and her Juris Doctor from the University of Illinois College of Law in 1997. She resides in Macomb with her husband, David.

The Ninth Judicial Circuit encompasses Fulton, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, and Warren Counties.