



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Senior Status Magistrate Kept Kanawha Magistrate Court Operational During COVID-19 Closure

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Senior Status Magistrate Marva Crouch has completed a month-long assignment as the sole Magistrate on duty in Kanawha County during the COVID-19 closure of the Kanawha County Judicial Annex.

The Annex was closed to the public and employees after a judicial employee tested positive for COVID-19 on March 21. Because all the Kanawha Magistrates had been in the building, they were quarantined and could not continue work. Supreme Court Chief Justice Tim Armstead appointed Senior Status Magistrate Crouch to fill in.

She worked March 26 to April 27, handling all Magistrate Court issues in the county from a conference room at a Supreme Court administrative office in Kanawha City. Rebecca Wilkinson, a magistrate court data clerk with the Magistrate Court Division of the Supreme Court Administrative Office, assisted her remotely.

Magistrate Crouch's last day on duty was April 27, when Magistrate Jesse Bailes took over. The quarantine period for Kanawha Magistrates has expired and active magistrates will now work out of the temporary office in Kanawha City. This week, Magistrate Michael Sisson is working the day shift.

"I want to thank Marva for filling in and setting a good foundation for us to continue serving the public," said Magistrate Bailes.

"I was happy to do it. I enjoyed the court work," said Magistrate Crouch, who was an active duty Magistrate in Kanawha County from 2004 to 2008, after working 10 years in the Kanawha County Magistrate Clerk's Office. Since she became senior status in 2009, she has been temporarily assigned all over the state to fill in for other magistrates.

In this assignment, she was on duty from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. She often worked more than that and was always on call no matter the hour or the day of the week.

She did bond reductions, domestic violence petition hearings and other work via phone, video conferencing and Skype. Law enforcement officers who needed warrants met her at the door of the building and other officers brought her paperwork from a box at the Annex every weekday and twice on Saturdays.

Magistrate Crouch scanned all the completed documents and emailed them to Ms. Wilkinson, who electronically put them in the appropriate case files. "She was the assistant from afar. We worked real well together," Magistrate Crouch said.

Although the public is still not allowed into the building where the Magistrates are working, the Magistrate on duty can handle emergency matters via telephone or video conferencing.

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