

Six Candidates Recommended for Vacant Appeals Court Post

The list of nominees to replace Georgia Court of Appeals Judge Stephen Goss, who died last August, includes four Superior Court judges and three women.

The state Judicial Nominating Commission has recommended six candidates to Gov. Brian Kemp—including four superior court judges and three women—to fill a vacancy on the Georgia Court of Appeals left by the death of Judge Stephen Goss last August.

Goss' replacement will be Kemp's first appointment to the Court of Appeals. The appointee will not face election until 2022.

The shortlist of candidates includes:

- Fulton County Superior Court Judge Christopher S. Brasher, appointed to the Fulton bench by former Gov. Sonny Perdue in 2006.
- Fulton County Superior Court Judge Paige Reese Whitaker, a former Fulton County prosecutor appointed to the bench by former Gov. Nathan Deal in 2017.
- Chattahoochee Circuit Superior Court Judge Benjamin A. Land, who was appointed to the bench last year by Deal. Land is the younger brother of Judge Clay Land of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia.
- Flint Circuit Superior Court Judge John A. "Trea" Pipkin III.
- Carolyn "Tippi" Cain Burch, an assistant U.S. attorney in the Northern District of Georgia and a former law partner of U.S. Attorney Byung J. "BJay" Pak at the firm then known as Chalmers Pak & Burch.
- Tabitha Ponder Beckford, a staff attorney for the state Judicial Council's standing Access to Justice Committee, who announced in May that she was running for Judge Sara Doyle's seat after Doyle announced a run for the state Supreme Court.

The commission made their recommendations after interviewing 26 applicants earlier this month. The interviewees were selected from an initial list of 101 individuals who applied or were nominated for the open appellate post.

The co-chairs of the committee include **Vincent Russo, a partner at The Robbins Firm in Atlanta**, who also serves as legal counsel to Kemp's campaign committee and as chief deputy general counsel to the state Republican Party; Mark Middleton, of counsel at Atlanta's Gilbert, Harrell, Sumerford & Martin; and Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit District Attorney Shannon Wallace.