

Colleen Ann Reali for Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations judge: endorsement editorial

By Editorial Board, *cleveland.com* and *The Plain Dealer*



Colleen Ann Reali is a magistrate in Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court who is seeking election on the Nov. 3 ballot as a judge of the court.

With longtime Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Judge Rosemary Grdina Gold about to retire, Domestic Relations Magistrate Colleen Ann Reali won [a five-way Democratic primary](#) in the spring to succeed her, and now faces Republican [James Cochran](#) on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Reali, 47, of Westlake, spent 14 years in the county prosecutor's office before being named a magistrate handling post-decree disputes for [Domestic Relations Judge Francine B. Goldberg](#), another former prosecutor. Reali says she loves the work but sees opportunities as a judge to help expand the assistance the court gives its rapidly rising number of "pro se" litigants, that is, those representing themselves without a lawyer. She also advocates financial literacy classes for those who, more and more frequently, are dividing their debts, not their assets, once their marriage ends.

Cochran, 67, of Bratenahl, has had a long legal career that included two stints as an assistant Cuyahoga County prosecutor and five years as an assistant Cleveland law director for employment matters. He's now a senior Ohio assistant attorney general, specializing in transportation-related eminent domain cases, which he says has given him expertise in how to value assets that's relevant for Domestic Relations court.

Cochran, a last-minute ballot replacement for fellow Republican John Mayer, still has scant experience in Domestic Relations court, despite his many years of civil practice.

By contrast, Reali is brimming with ideas and energy for how to make the court a better -- and safer -- place. It is true, as Cochran notes, that all five Domestic Relations judges are now female; Reali's election won't change that. But the gender imbalance is hardly more relevant than the experience and reform insights Reali would bring to the job.

Voters in Cuyahoga County should elect Colleen Ann Reali to Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court in the Jan. 8 term. Early voting in the Nov. 3 election begins Oct. 6.

The two candidates for Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court, Jan. 8 term -- Domestic Relations Court Magistrate Colleen Ann Reali and Senior Assistant Ohio Attorney General James Cochran -- were interviewed by the editorial board of The Plain Dealer and cleveland.com on Sept. 17, 2020, as part of the endorsement process. Listen to audio of this interview below:

Editor's note: Audio of the interview was added to this endorsement editorial on Sept. 24.

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Other resources for voters:

League of Women Voters vote411.org voters' guide.

Judge4Yourself [judicial ratings](#) from five Cuyahoga County bar associations.

[JudicialVotesCount.org](#) website with information on judicial candidates' legal background and why they are seeking judicial office.

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