

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

THE CHIEF JUDGE'S 2026 HEARING ON CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES IN NEW YORK



Thursday, September 24, 2026
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Court of Appeals, 20 Eagle St., Albany, NY



The hearing will be live streamed and a link will be provided.

The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the State of New York, Hon. Rowan D. Wilson, announces a statewide public hearing to evaluate the continuing unmet civil legal services needs in New York and to assess the level of resources necessary to meet those needs.

The Chief Judge will report to the Legislature, as requested in its June 2010 Joint Resolution, on the information obtained at the hearing and on the ongoing work of the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice.

The Chief Judge will be joined on the hearing panel by the four Presiding Justices of the Appellate Division: Hon. Dianne T. Renwick (First Department), Hon. Hector D. LaSalle (Second Department), Hon. Elizabeth A. Garry (Third Department), and Hon. Gerald D. Whalen (Fourth Department), as well as the Chief Administrative Judge, Hon. Joseph A. Zayas, and the President of the New York State Bar Association, Taa Grays.

About this Hearing: This hearing is to receive information, recommendations, and data from interested individuals, organizations, and other entities statewide, particularly those serving the civil legal services needs of rural or urban communities, that address the following core areas:

- **The role of the Judiciary Civil Legal Services (JCLS) program as a stable, multi-year funding source** that enables providers to respond to regional needs, pivot during emerging crises, and maintain uninterrupted services, particularly in the face of significant federal funding uncertainties.
- **How JCLS funding supports access to justice for vulnerable populations**, including rural communities and those who cannot be served under federally restricted funding streams, and how this framework has positioned New York as a national leader in civil justice funding.
- **The impact of JCLS funding on workforce sustainability**, including its role in supporting competitive salaries, reducing attrition, retaining experienced staff, addressing the unique challenges facing rural communities, and aligning administrative processes with IOLA to reduce burdens and increase client-focused work.
- **Strategies to address the unmet civil legal needs of low-income and other vulnerable New Yorkers**, including innovative approaches to service delivery and adaptation to shifting community demands.
- **Ideas for expanding the roles of legal advocates and non-lawyer assistance** as part of broader efforts to meet unmet needs and increase system capacity.
- **Challenges and innovations in addressing consumer debt cases**, including structural challenges, court practices, emerging trends, and recommendations for strengthening legal protections and access to representation in these matters.

The Hearing Panel will consider both oral statements and written submissions:

- Identify yourself and your affiliation.
- Attach a prepared statement or detailed outline of the proposed statement, specifying which of the topics described above will be addressed.
- The Hearing Panel will not accept comments about individual litigation, judges, or attorneys.

Oral Statements (*by invitation only*)

- Email deadline: **July 24, 2026**
- Max presentation length: 10 minutes.
- If not selected, your submission will be considered a written comment.

Written-Only Submission

- Email deadline: **August 25, 2026**

About the Commission:

The Permanent Commission on Access to Justice assists the Chief Judge in preparing the hearing and reporting its results.

Co-Chairs

Hon. Christina L. Ryba
Hon. Seth M. Marnin
Janet Sabel, Esq.

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