

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Chief Judge Penney S. Azcarate is the first woman to serve as Chief Judge of the Fairfax County Circuit Court. With 18 years on the bench across the Circuit and General District Courts, she is recognized statewide for her leadership in judicial innovation, specialty dockets, and access-to-justice initiatives. She created Virginia's first stand-alone Veteran Treatment Docket and implemented Fairfax County's Drug Court. She has presided over numerous complex and high-profile matters, including *Depp v. Heard* (2022) and *Commonwealth v. Banfield* (2026).

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

Chief Judge, Fairfax County Circuit Court (2021-2026)

- Lead judicial officer responsible for court operations and administration of a 15-judge bench.
- Oversee development and implementation of access-to-justice, racial equity, and modernization initiatives.
- Key initiatives include:
 - Paperless court systems and expanded remote access
 - Enhanced interpreter services
 - Community outreach and public education efforts
- Presiding judge over major civil and criminal matters, including high-profile litigation.

Judge, Fairfax County Circuit Court (2015-2021)

- Appointed after service on the General District Court bench; presides over felony criminal cases, major civil litigation, family matters, and administrative appeals.

Judge, Fairfax County General District Court (2008-2015)

- Presided over criminal, traffic, and civil matters in one of the largest jurisdictions in Virginia.

LEADERSHIP & STATEWIDE SERVICE

Chair, Supreme Court of Virginia – Veteran Specialty Docket Council

- Oversees approval, standards, and training for Veteran Treatment Dockets statewide.
- Developed statewide curriculum and served as mentor to new and developing dockets.

Member, Judicial Council of Virginia

- Participates in studying and recommending improvements to the structure, rules, and operations of the Commonwealth's judicial system.

Mentor Judge & Peer Coach, Office of the Executive Secretary

- Provides mentorship, training, and peer coaching for judges across Virginia.

Juris Master Board of Advisors, Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University

- Assisted in developing the juris master program, assisted in recruitment, and presented at several classes.

KEY INITIATIVES & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Founder, Veteran Treatment Docket (2015)
 - First stand-alone veteran docket in Virginia; serves combat veterans with mental health and/or substance use disorders.
- Founder, Fairfax County Drug Court (2018)
 - Designed and implemented a comprehensive program addressing substance use through treatment and judicial accountability.
- Court Modernization Leader
 - Led transition to paperless systems and expanded remote court access.
 - Advanced equity initiatives and community-based engagement strategies.

AWARDS & HONORS

- Influential Women in Law, Virginia Lawyers Weekly (2022)
- Distinguished Alumni Award, Old Dominion University (2022)
- President's Award, Fairfax Bar Association (2020)
- Leader in Law, Virginia Lawyers Weekly (2017)
- President's Award, Fairfax Bar Association (2026)

PRESENTATIONS & TRAINING

Presented to and trained:

- Fairfax Bar Association

- Virginia State Bar
- Virginia New Judge Training
- Virginia Judges & Lawyers Assistance Program (VJLAP)
- Judicial Council of California
- Judicial Conclave of New Mexico
- Corporate Council, Women of Color Conference
- Law schools, military organizations, and various state, federal, and local governmental groups

MILITARY SERVICE

United States Marine Corps – Active Duty & Reserves

- Commissioned upon graduation from Old Dominion University.
- Served as a Communications Officer in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm.
- Honorably discharged as Major, U.S. Marine Corps Reserves.

LEGAL EXPERIENCE (PRIOR TO JUDICIAL APPOINTMENT)

- Prosecutor, Fairfax County (2000-2005)
- Criminal Defense Attorney and Civil Litigator, Briglia & Hundley, Fairfax County (2005-2015)

EDUCATION

J.D., George Mason University School of Law
B.S., Criminal Justice, Old Dominion University

- Military scholarship recipient
- Commissioned second lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps upon graduation

PUBLICATION

- Challenging Cases, edited by Russell Canan, Gregory Mize, and Fredrick Weisberg (2026)
 - “When the Media Circus Comes to Town: John C. Depp, II v. Amber Laura Heard”