Lagoa and Luck Join the Supreme Court

By Jim Ash
Senior Editor
Third District Court of Appeal Judges Barbara Lagoa and Robert Luck were appointed to the Supreme Court by Gov. Ron DeSantis within days of his January 8 inauguration.
Lagoa, a Miami native and the daughter of immigrants, is Florida’s first Cuban-American woman justice. Luck, another Miami native, was hailed as the first Jewish justice appointed in decades. Their appointments took effect immediately.

To prepare announcements, DeSantis praised both justices for stellar careers that included stints in law enforcement and as assistant U.S. attorneys. The nearly back-to-back announcements underscored DeSantis’ eagerness to fill three vacancies on the high court that occurred when former Justices Barbara Pariente, Peggy Quince, and Fred Lewis reached the constitutional age limit and stepped down the day DeSantis became Florida’s 46th governor.

As this News went to press, DeSantis had yet to announce his third selection. DeSantis told reporters that he personally interviewed all candidates forwarded by the Supreme Court Judicial Nominating Commission.

Justice Lagoa
In a morning press conference at the historic Freedom Tower in Miami, DeSantis said Lagoa’s impressive credentials and compelling personal story made her an obvious first choice.

“I am grateful to you and I am deeply honored,” Lagoa, surrounded by family and friends, said.

DeSantis praised Lagoa for rising from humble roots, the daughter of Cuban immigrants, to the top of her profession. Saying she had presided over more than 11,000 cases in the past dozen years as an appellate judge, DeSantis said Lagoa was the most qualified of the 11 candidates he interviewed.

“She has earned the respect of the Florida legal community and of all her peers,” said DeSantis, adding she “has been the essence” of what a judge should be.

“She understands the rule of law; how important that is to society,” DeSantis said.

“It is the role of judges to apply, not to alter,” the work of elected representatives, said Lagoa, who has worked at prominent firms, including Greenberg Traurig and Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. “In our great state and our great country, we are governed by the rule of law.”

Maicia D. Garcia, president of the Cuban American Bar Association, said for the past 12 years Lagoa has served her community and the judiciary as the first Cuban-American woman on the Third District Court of Appeal and that CABA is proud of all her accomplishments and her new role on the Supreme Court.

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Cyber security training offered by LegalFuel

Site expands its practice tips and advice for Bar members

By Jim Ash
Senior Editor
A recent LogicForce survey of 300 American law firms revealed a 41 percent increase in the number of data security audits demanded by their corporate clients.
The six-month trend is likely related to the recent hacking of two prominent law firms, and the federal indictments of the alleged cyber criminals who used stolen law firm email addresses to defraud $4 million worth of insider stock trades.
And the increase in demand for security audits is the good news, says Miami lawyer Alfred Sakali of Shook, Hardy & Bacon, a cyber security expert who advises law firms on cyber risks.

Sakali said, “There has been a surge in the cyber security industry that law firms are the weak link.”

Young Lawyers Division immediate past chair unearthed the survey.

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Court calls for eight new circuit and county judges

Florida needs four new circuit judges and four new county judges — all in Hillsborough County — but requires two fewer county court judges in Brevard County and one less in Pasco County.

Two of the new circuit Ninth Circuit and one each in the First and 14th circuits, the court said in its annual certification opinion to the Legislature.
The December 26 per curiam opinion said no new judges are needed on the district courts of appeal.

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Justices

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"As a fellow daughter of Cuban exiles, I am excited that Gov. DeSantis made such a wise choice for the Florida Supreme Court," Garcia said. "Justice Lagoa has always set a bright example for the legal community and has an impeccable record as a jurist."

Lagoa was appointed to the Third District Court of Appeal by former Gov. Jeb Bush in 2006. She received her JD from Columbia University in 1992 after earning an undergraduate degree in English from Florida International University. In 2003, Lagoa joined the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida as an assistant U.S. attorney, trying numerous criminal jury trials, including drug conspiracies and Hobbs Act violations, as well as criminal appeals. Prior to coming to the bench, Lagoa's law practice focused on general and complex commercial litigation, including employment, securities, construction, and insurance coverage litigation.

Lagoa thanked a mentor from FIU for urging her to apply to Columbia, which she unabashedly described as "the best law school" in the country.

A member of the Dade County Bar Association and ABA, Lagoa has also been active in civic causes in South Florida, including serving on the board of the YWCA of Greater Miami and Dade County, the Film Society of Miami, Kristi House, and the FIU Alumni Association. Lagoa is also a member of the William Hoveider Chapter of the American Inn of Court, the Junior League of Miami, and Fairchild Tropical Gardens.

Judge Lagoa and her husband, attorney Paul C. Huck, Jr., have three children.

Justice Luck

Luck's rapid career ascent culminated January 14 with Gov. DeSantis naming the 39-year-old former federal prosecutor to the Supreme Court. Standing next to his wife, Jennifer, and their two young children, Julia and Jacob, Luck thanked DeSantis for coming to his children's Jewish academy, Scheick Hillel Community School in Miami, to appoint the first Jewish justice to the court in recent years.

"I have taken an oath to make the Constitution, and not the judiciary, supreme," Luck said. "I swear to you, governor, I will keep that oath today, tomorrow, and God willing, for the next 35 years."

During a brief question and answer period following the announcement, DeSantis praised Luck's legal qualifications, calling him a natural choice.

"He writes so well," DeSantis said. "He was born to be a judge, there's no doubt about it. Ending his brief remarks with a prayer of thanks, Luck later assured reporters that he does not let his religious faith prejudice his professional judgement.

"It guides me as a person, as a man, and as a husband," he said. "But it's very different from my job as a judge."

Formerly an appellate lawyer for Greenburg Traurig, Luck was also an assistant United States attorney in the Southern District of Florida from 2008-2015, where he worked on appeals, major crimes, and economic crimes. By the time he left that office, Luck was deputy chief of the Major Crimes Division. He was appointed to the 11th Circuit bench in September 2013 and served there until he was named to the Third DCA in March 2017.

A product of the Miami-Dade County public schools, Luck earned an undergraduate degree in economics at the University of Florida before graduating magna cum laude from the University of Florida's Levin College of Law in 2004. He also served as editor and chief of the Florida Law Review.

Luck also demonstrated unusual composure in the most trying circumstances. In his application, Luck recalled a 2015 incident in which a defendant, who was facing charges of battering a person older than

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