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Phila. Judge Lisa Rau Is Set to Step Down in Upcoming Months

Rau did not immediately disclose why she is stepping down from the bench, or what her next steps will be, except to say that "a new adventure calls."

By Max Mitchell | August 07, 2019



Philadelphia Judge Lisa M. Rau.

Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Judge Lisa Rau told The Legal on Wednesday that she is planning to leave the First Judicial District in the coming months.

In an interview Wednesday, the longtime Philadelphia judge said that, after 18 years as a judge, she will be leaving the bench in two months. Rau did not immediately disclose why she is stepping down from the bench, or what her next steps will be, except to say that “a new adventure calls.”

“As the child of a military pilot we lived all over the world, including Kabul, Afghanistan. I learned early on to appreciate adventures,” she said. “This job certainly has been incredibly rewarding. There hasn’t been a single day in the last 18 years-plus that I didn’t appreciate the responsibility that Philadelphians gave me to serve this vital

role in our system.”

Rau (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/900005373947/gordon-defends-rau-takes-da-to-task/>) was appointed to the bench in 2001 by former Gov. Tom Ridge. Rau initially heard criminal cases, where she was one of a handful (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1202425358861/tensions-rise-between-police-and-judges/>) of judges to be criticized (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/900005373947/gordon-defends-rau-takes-da-to-task/>) by then-District Attorney Lynne Abraham for alleged leniency with defendants. Allan Gordon, who was serving as chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association, came to Rau’s defense in that spat.

Rau later moved on to oversee a civil (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1202753087947/415m-settlement-in-case-of-boy-run-over-killed/>) docket, where she spent more than 15 years handling civil cases. Rau often oversaw complex (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1202781970227/11m-awarded-to-man-shot-by-escaped-devereux-patient/>) litigation, including malpractice (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1392313087057/client-cant-recoup-fees-from-lawyer-who-spoiled-plea-deal/>) and products liability cases. In March she oversaw a case involving a fall through a skylight, which resulted in a nearly \$25 million verdict. (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/2019/03/21/jury-awards-24-8m-to-roofer-injured-in-skylight-fall/>)

Rau also held leadership roles on the bench, including spending five years as team leader of major civil trials, organizing the judicial fellowship (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1202488774177/lean-legal-market-inspires-phila-judicial-fellowship-program/>) program in 2011, overseeing the court’s Zolof mass tort, helping implement (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1202434179189/court-starts-mandatory-mediation-for-landlordtenant-appeals/>) mandatory mediation for landlord-tenant appeals and acting as co-chairwoman of the court’s judicial education committee.

News of Rau's departure comes little more than a week after another prominent figure on the court—Judge John Milton Younge (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/2019/08/01/philadelphia-judge-and-pittsburgh-lawyer-confirmed-to-federal-bench/>)—left the bench. On Aug. 1, Younge was confirmed for a spot as a U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Before becoming a judge, Rau was a partner at the well-known civil rights firm Kairys, Rudovsky, Messing, Feinberg & Lin, and before that she worked in the Public Interest Law Center.

She earned her bachelor's degree from Colgate University and her law degree from Stanford Law School.

Rau is also married (<https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/sites/thelegalintelligencer/2018/01/11/temin-named-krasners-first-assistant-sees-role-as-beginning-not-a-comeback/>) to Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, a former criminal defense and civil rights attorney who ran on a platform of criminal justice reform.

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