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Massachusetts Bar Association Congratulates Past President Robert W. Harnais on District Court Appointment

BOSTON, Mass. — The Massachusetts Bar Association congratulates Past President Robert W. Harnais on his appointment to the District Court following an affirmative vote by the Governor’s Council on Wednesday afternoon, Oct. 21. Harnais, who became the MBA’s first Hispanic president when he led the association during its 2015-2016 year, was nominated in September by Gov. Charlie Baker to fill the vacancy created by Judge Dominic J. Paratore’s retirement.

“On behalf of the entire MBA, I offer my sincere congratulations to Bob Harnais on his well-deserved appointment to the District Court bench,” said MBA President Denise I. Murphy. “As a member of the judiciary, Bob will continue his career-long commitment to public service and remain a firm advocate for equal justice for all residents of the commonwealth.”

A partner and general practitioner at Mahoney & Harnais in Quincy, Harnais joins the judicial ranks with a broad range of experience in the legal community and criminal justice system. Prior to his appointment to the bench, he had served as co-chair of the MBA’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee; on the Criminal Justice Section Council; and as a member of the Volunteer Recognition and Leadership Academy Steering committees. Since 1999, Harnais had also held the position of general counsel for the Norfolk County Sheriff’s Office, where he was acting sheriff from October to December 2018.

Harnais previously served on the MBA’s Executive Management Board and House of Delegates, and as co-chair of the MBA’s Crime Lab Task Force. During his term as president, Harnais established the MBA’s Section 35 Helpline to provide free legal assistance to individuals seeking court-ordered inpatient treatment for friends and family members struggling with drug or alcohol addiction.

In addition to his MBA service, Harnais is a past president of the Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys (MAHA), the New England Bar Association and the Bar Association of Norfolk County, and a past regional president of the Hispanic National Bar Association. A former probation officer assigned to Quincy District Court, Harnais has also served since 2008 as chairman of the Braintree Planning Board.

Harnais is a graduate of New England School of Law and earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Harnais’ Oct 21 confirmation followed a hearing before the Governor’s Council on Oct. 14, prior to which he was screened and recommended by the Judicial Nominating Commission and the Joint Bar Committee on Judicial Appointments.

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.