Fiscal Year 2018 was a historic year for the Court of Chancery with the enactment of legislation to expand the court for the first time since 1989, from five to seven members. This legislation was the end result of an extensive study of the court’s workload trends that was undertaken in 2017. As described in last year’s annual report, that study showed that the primary population the court serves (Delaware business entities) increased by approximately 500% during the 25-year period from 1992 to 2016, and that the court’s workload had increased significantly as measured by numerous metrics. The study also explained how the court’s case mix had changed over time to include an increasing number of complex commercial cases on top of its traditional docket of corporate governance cases.

In September 2018, Governor Carney nominated Morgan T. Zurn and Kathaleen St. J. McCormick to serve as our two newest Vice Chancellors. They both were confirmed by the Delaware State Senate in October 2018, and have since taken the oath of office. Their addition to the Court of Chancery doubles, from two to four, the number of women who have served on the court in its 226-year history.

*In the above chart, the blue section represents Civil Actions and the orange sections represent Civil Miscellaneous.
Vice Chancellor Zurn formerly served as a Master in Chancery, where she was responsible for adjudicating cases with a focus on guardianship applications, property disputes and trust and estate matters. She previously worked as a Deputy Attorney General in the Delaware Department of Justice and as a patent litigator in private practice.

Before joining the bench, Vice Chancellor McCormick was a partner at Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor LLP, where her practice focused on corporate, commercial and alternative entity litigation. She previously worked with the Community Legal Aid Society, Inc., handling public interest matters statewide.

We are thrilled to welcome Vice Chancellors Zurn and McCormick to our ranks and are deeply grateful to Governor Carney, Chief Justice Strine, and the members of the General Assembly for their support in adding these new positions to the Court of Chancery. As a result of Master Zurn’s elevation, the court is conducting a search for a new Master.

The vast majority of the time and attention of the court’s judicial officers is devoted to handling civil actions, which principally consist of corporate and commercial cases that are individually assigned. The data table (above) depicts the number of civil action filings and dispositions over the past ten years. The court also has a docket of civil miscellaneous matters, which primarily consists of guardianship proceedings for adults and the property of adults and minors as well as trust and estate proceedings. The pie chart (on preceding page) depicts the number of active civil actions and civil miscellaneous matters as of the end of FY 2018.

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Court of Chancery

Standing left to right:
Vice Chancellor Tamika Montgomery-Reeves
Vice Chancellor Joseph R. Slights III

Sitting left to right:
Vice Chancellor J. Travis Laster
Chancellor Andre G. Bouchard
Vice Chancellor Sam Glasscock III

Not pictured:
Vice Chancellor Morgan T. Zurn
Vice Chancellor Kathaleen St. J. McCormick