

Governor Chris Christie Makes Historic New Jersey State Supreme Court Nominations with Bruce Harris and Phillip Kwon

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Nominees Bring Experience, Distinctive Career Paths and the Highest Integrity to New Jersey's State Supreme Court

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Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today made two historic nominations to the New Jersey State Supreme Court with Bruce A. Harris, Mayor of Chatham, a lawyer with over 20 years of legal experience, and Phillip H. Kwon, First Assistant Attorney General in the Department of Law and Public Safety and former Deputy Chief of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division. Both Harris and Kwon will not only bring accomplished and respected legal careers and records of service to the state's highest court, but also a historic level of diversity to the membership of the Court.

"I am extraordinarily proud to announce these two historic nominations to the New Jersey State Supreme Court. Bruce and Phil are each accomplished and talented individuals with skilled legal minds who are highly respected in the legal community. Just as importantly, each of them has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to serving their state and communities," said Governor Chris Christie.

"Additionally, not only do their different backgrounds and career paths bring distinctive and important perspectives to the Supreme Court, Bruce and Phil also capture our state's diversity in a way never before seen in the history of the Court," continued Governor Christie.

Today's nominations build upon Governor Christie's commitment to diversity on the courts in four historic ways. Bruce Harris will become the third African-American to serve on the State Supreme Court and the first openly gay member of the Court. Phil Kwon will become the first Asian-American to serve on the Supreme Court and the first immigrant to serve since the 1947 Constitution created the Court. Furthermore, Justice Anne Paterson, nominated by Governor Christie and confirmed, created the first female majority in the history of the Supreme Court, one of only five in the nation.

"Today is an important and historic symbol for New Jersey and our country. I am proud to be nominating two legal professionals who not only have a passion for this state and a dedication to the legal system, but also capture New Jersey's great diversity," concluded Governor Christie.

Bruce Harris is a lawyer with over 20 years of legal experience, most recently working at the law firm of Greenberg Traurig and previously at Riker, Danzig, Scherer, Hyland and Perretti. His work has focused primarily on issues of public finance and commercial lending. Harris graduated magna cum laude from Amherst College and graduated with honors from Boston University Graduate School of Management and Yale Law School.

Harris has a long record of service to his town and community, including his recent election as Mayor of Chatham Borough and previously service as a member of the Chatham Borough Council. He has served on the Chatham Environmental Commission, the Chatham Historic Preservation Commission, and on the boards of the UMDNJ Foundation and the New Jersey Health Foundation.

Phillip Kwon currently serves as First Assistant Attorney General where he has been the principal legal and strategic adviser to the Attorney General. Previously, he served New Jersey as part of the United States Attorney's Office as the Deputy Chief of the Criminal Division, the Chief of the Violent Crimes Unit and the Assistant US Attorney of both the Special Prosecutions Division and the Criminal Division. In that capacity, he was the lead prosecutor on a diverse range of federal crimes and public corruption matters, in addition to taking on cases against some of New Jersey's most notorious and violent groups, such as the Bloods, Crips, and Latin Kings.

Kwon graduated from Georgetown University and from Rutgers Law School where he was an editor of the Law Review.

Both nominations are subject to Senate confirmation. In an agreement reached last May to end the impasse over the nomination of Justice Anne Patterson, Senate President Sweeney promised an expedited confirmation process for these nominations, with an appropriate review process and up-or-down vote taking place in time for each to be seated by March of this year.

Senator Sweeney: "The Governor has a couple of nominations come March of next year and one of the things I hope the Governor keeps in mind is racial diversity of the courts. We need to make sure we have a racially diverse court that looks like the state of New Jersey but there's a commitment from me to move the nominations come March also." (Senator Steven Sweeney, Press Availability, 5/2011)

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