

Re-elect Judge

Rita Mella

to **SURROGATE'S COURT**

Judge Rita Mella has served in the Manhattan Surrogate's Court since January 2013. During her tenure, she has presided over more than 40,000 cases, guiding them to resolution through trials, decisions, orders, mediation, or settlement.

Judge Mella has written thousands of decisions, many of which have been published in the Official Reporter and the New York Law Journal. Her rulings often address emerging legal issues and have influenced professional discourse and legal education, with some becoming part of law school curricula.

Before her election to the Surrogate's Court, Judge Mella served six years as a Civil Court Judge assigned to the Manhattan Criminal Court. She also worked as a Court Attorney in the Surrogate's, Supreme, Family, Criminal, and Civil Courts.



**RE-ELECT DEMOCRAT JUDGE
RITA MELLA *to* SURROGATE'S COURT**

RE-ELECT DEMOCRAT JUDGE RITA MELLA *to* SURROGATE'S COURT

The Surrogate's Court is a specialized court that handles the affairs of people who pass away, including matters involving wills, trusts, estates, adoptions, and guardianships.

One of the busiest courts in the state, the New York County Surrogate's Court receives about 10,000 new cases each year. Given the substantial value of assets of many Manhattan residents, and the complexity of estate planning to protect those assets, the court is often presented with novel and challenging legal issues. At the same time, the court serves thousands of New Yorkers with modest estates—many of whom appear without legal representation.

SERVICES PROVIDED TO FAMILIES

Judge Rita Mella has also presided over hundreds of adoptions. Her decision in *Matter of G* expanded eligibility for prospective adoptive parents, making it possible for more children to find permanent homes and avoid prolonged stays in foster care.

In guardianship matters, Judge Mella oversees cases involving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities—from initial appointments to annual reviews. Additionally, when children inherit property, she ensures that their assets are properly managed and preserved, with court oversight of expenditures and guardian accountability.

Re-elect Judge
Rita Mella
to **SURROGATE'S COURT**

mella4surrogate2026@gmail.com

Paid for by Re-elect Surrogate Mella



EXPANDED ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Judge Rita Mella's work has resulted in an expansion of services provided by the Surrogate's Court. She was instrumental in the creation of New York State's first Surrogate's Court Help Center, established to assist families who cannot afford legal counsel. Located in the Manhattan Surrogate's Court, the Help Center serves more than 4,000 people annually. It played a vital role during the pandemic and has since been replicated in other counties across the state.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, while many institutions reduced operations, the Surrogate's Court was confronted with a substantial increase in urgent filings—particularly requests to access the homes of individuals who died unexpectedly. Judge Mella remained fully engaged throughout that period, meeting the heightened demand for timely judicial action.

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Judge Mella serves on the Unified Court System's state-wide Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission and the state-wide Advisory Committee on Alternative Dispute Resolution. Judge Mella has taught Administrative Law at CUNY Law School. And for more than 30 years, she has served on the board of directors of the Dominican Women's Development Center, a community based organization that provides social services in Northern Manhattan.