

Biography of Hon. Javier E. Vargas

The Honorable Javier E. Vargas was nominated by Governor Kathy Hochul and confirmed by the Senate for the NYS Court of Claims on June 3, 2022. With that appointment, he became the first openly gay man and Latino LGBTQ+ judge in the Court of Claims. Previously, Judge Vargas served as a Judge in the Family Court of the State of New York, Kings County, appointed in 2015. Between 2013 and 2015, Judge Vargas began his judicial career as a Civil Court Judge assigned to the Housing Part in Bronx County. Prior thereto, Judge Vargas served with distinction for the New York State Unified Court System in various capacities since 1993, including Senior Court Attorney in the New York State Court of Appeals; Principal Law Clerk in Supreme Court and the Appellate Division, Second Department; and Chief Court Attorney for the NYS Supreme Court, Appellate Term, First Department. Judge Vargas received his undergraduate degree from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, law degree from SUNY Buffalo School of Law, and a Master of Law degree from New York University School of Law in 1993.

Judge Vargas has moderated and lectured on numerous panels of Continuing Legal Education courses in the areas of Domestic Relations, Housing and Family Laws, Domestic Violence, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, diversity/intersectionality and virtual courtroom protocols and evidence presentation. He mentors attorneys and encourages judicial service by presenting and moderating yearly Pathways to the Judiciary programs. Judge Vargas is actively involved with several professional associations and currently holds positions at the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) and its Judicial Division, as secretary, as well as the Latino Judges Association and the International Association of LGBTQ Judges, where he sits as a board member. Among the previous positions he has held are HNBA Regional Deputy President for several years, HNBA Secretary of National Elections; President-Elect of the Puerto Rican Bar Association (PRBA); Chair of the PRBA Scholarship Fund Selection Committee and Committee Member of the LGBT Bar Association Judicial Internship Committee, selecting hundreds of law students scholarship recipients; and Chair of the HNBA-NY Law School-Sin Limites Program, working with a team of HNBA members to mentor dozens of high school and college students on their path to law school. With the HNBA Judicial Division, Judge Vargas has helped organize and chaired the Dispute Settlement Body of the HNBA Uvaldo Herrera Moot Court Competition for the last seven years.

Judge Vargas has received several accolades, including the 2022 President's Award from the International Association of LGBTQ Judges, 2020 SUNY Law School OutLaw Award, 2018 Spirit Award by the Cervantes Society, 2017 HNBA Latino Judge of the Year and the 2016 Special Recognition Award by the National Hispanic Pre-Law Conference. He is dedicated to a number of other charitable and cultural organizations, such as the Holy Cross Church, Volunteer Lawyers Project, as well as professional bar associations, like the New York City Bar Association, the LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York and the NYS Family Court Judges Association.