

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lisa Rodwin Seeking Appointment to Family Court

BUFFALO, NEW YORK – Lisa Bloch Rodwin announced today that she is seeking the gubernatorial appointment to Erie County Family Court. Rodwin, an attorney for over twenty years and currently Chief of the Domestic Violence Bureau in the Erie County District Attorney’s office, is seeking the Family Court seat left vacant by Hon. James Dillon, who was elected to the New York State Supreme Court last month. If appointed, then she would run in the November 2008 election for a full ten year term.

“With over 20 years of courtroom experience as a prosecutor, and almost 15 years experience working with families in crisis, I believe that I have the skills and credentials to be an effective Family Court judge,” Rodwin said. “When people come into Family Court, they are looking for a judge with an open mind who not only knows the law but who is ready to apply it with good judgment, common sense and fundamental fairness, while recognizing that the best interest of their children must be considered first and foremost.”

Rodwin, a nationally recognized expert in domestic violence, has been a guest three times in the past six months on the Oprah show and has appeared on 20/20 with Diane Sawyer. She has been a keynote speaker at conferences around the country on family violence issues and the effect on children who witness violence in their homes. Within the last year, Ms. Bloch Rodwin has received the Buffalo News Founders Award, the Profile in Courage Award from the Family Justice Center, the Advocate for Change Award from the Alexa Foundation and the Award of Excellence from the Everywoman Opportunity Center. She has also received the highest recognition from her peers in the legal community, receiving the Leaders in Law Award from the Daily Record, Lawyer of the Year from the Women Lawyers of WNY and the Juvenile Justice Award from the NYS Women’s Bar Association.

In leading the coordination of services for victims of family violence and assisting in the development of new specialized Domestic Violence Courts and the Family Justice Center, Ms. Rodwin has contributed to the reduction in the family violence homicide rate in Erie County from 15 per year, when she founded the Domestic Violence Bureau in 1995, to zero within the last 18 months. In recognition of her skills and accomplishments in the field, Rodwin has received widespread political support for the gubernatorial appointment. Mayor Byron Brown and the entire Western New York Democratic delegation have committed to supporting her application for the appointment from the Governor.

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Assemblymember Crystal Peoples praised Lisa's qualifications, stating "My good friend Lisa Rodwin has dramatically improved the response of the justice system to abused women and children, she is a terrific candidate for Family Court." Assemblymember Mark Schroeder stated "Western New Yorkers are fortunate to have in Lisa Rodwin a passion for justice, legal skill and strong commitment to the safety of our community's children. This combination is the perfect match for the Family Court bench."

Lisa Bloch Rodwin, a *summa cum laude* graduate of Rutgers University and graduate of UB Law School, began her legal career in 1985 as an Assistant District Attorney under District Attorney Richard J. Arcara. She spent many years in the Appeals Bureau appearing on behalf of the District Attorney before numerous Appellate Courts. Her work in the City Court Bureau showed her that the special needs of families affected by domestic violence were not adequately met by the structure of the criminal justice system. In 1995, with the blessing of District Attorney Kevin Dillon, she created the Domestic Violence Unit, the first of its kind outside of Metropolitan New York City, where she specialized in prosecuting family offenses and child abuse cases. Since 1995 her unit has prosecuted over 45,000 cases involving family violence, child abuse and elder abuse.

Two of the more notable cases she personally litigated were *People v. Ulner Still*, where a 13 year old boy was forced by his father to videotape the abuse of his mother, and *People v. Anthony Woods*, the first marital rape trial in Western New York in 25 years. Both trials resulted in convictions; the defendants were sentenced to 36 and 50 years respectively, among the longest sentences in the state for domestic abuse. While those cases received tremendous attention from the public and the press, Lisa quickly points out that the cases of which she is most proud are those that get no publicity.

"Criminal prosecution is the avenue of last resort," stated Rodwin. "It is far better for the entire family when the problems which led them to court are resolved through the intervention of support systems designed to help families identify problems and prevent violence. These are the true successes."

Rodwin's work is not limited to the courtroom. She has taught at UB Law School and lectured at Canisius College. Lisa has developed and conducted trainings for attorneys, social workers and law enforcement officers on Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Investigations, Internet Crimes Against Children, Elder Abuse and Stalking.

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Her tireless efforts and advocacy on behalf of families in the most difficult circumstances have led to numerous awards. In addition to the exemplary service awards listed above, the Coalition Against Family Violence, Hispanics United, NYS Crime Prevention Coalition, and PreventionFocus have recognized her work.

Ms Bloch Rodwin spends her free time by volunteering her skills to many causes. She is a founding member of the *It Happened to Alexa Foundation* which provides funding to allow families of child-abuse and sexual assault victims stay with their loved ones during the trial. She served as a co-chair of the Criminal Law Committee for the NYS Women's Bar Association for three years and was a State Director for the Western New York Chapter. As a member of the Board of Directors for the YWCA, Ms. Rodwin chaired the *Week Without Violence*, which featured an educational program at local schools to help teach children how to report violence in their home or school. She served as the first Board President for the Erie County Family Justice Center. In addition to teaching classes at the law school and local colleges, she frequently lectures community groups on topics involving families in crisis.

Ms. Rodwin lives in Amherst with her husband Michael, a researcher at Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and is the proud mother of two sons, David, a recent honors graduate of Johns Hopkins University, and Benjamin, a student at Brandeis University. Above all, Rodwin has devoted her life to families, her own and those of Western New Yorkers.

"Being a Family Court Judge is a great responsibility which I know I can fulfill," she added. "Protecting families and children is the best job there is."

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