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VOLUME 269—NO. 71 \$4.00

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IN BRIEF

Senate Schedules Hearings For Chief Judge, Associate Nominations to NY's Highest Court for Early Next Week

The New York Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on Gov. Kathy Hochul's nomination of Court of Appeals Associate Judge Rowan Wilson for chief judge of the state's highest court at noon Monday, the committee's chairman, state Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, D-Manhattan, said Thursday.

And at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, the same committee—which vets nominations to the New York Court of Appeals—will hold a hearing for Hochul's nomination of Selendy Gay Elsbere partner Caitlin Halligan for associate judge, presuming Wilson's promotion is ultimately confirmed by the Senate.

Hoylman-Sigal said that, since Wilson's seat on the court is not yet vacant, there will not be a vote on Halligan immediately after her hearing.

"I hope it's straightforward," Hoylman-Sigal told the New York Law Journal. "We've got two excellent nominees, but we'll see. We'll have a lot of questions from the members of the committee and then determine the vote, although we won't be voting on Halligan until a later date."

Wilson has been on the Court of Appeals for six years, would be the state's first Black chief judge, and is said to be among its two most liberal jurists.

He was also a candidate for chief judge following the mandatory retirement of Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman in 2015, but the job went to Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, who resigned from the court last year.

A 1984 Harvard Law School graduate, Wilson clerked for Judge John Browning of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, joined Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York City and spent his career there—working his way up to senior partner—until 2017, when then-Gov. Andrew Cuomo nominated him for the Court of Appeals.

Halligan is a former New York solicitor general and general counsel to the Manhattan District Attorney's office. She has argued six cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The hearings are part of the second iteration Hochul's quest to replace DiFiore.

The Democratic-controlled Senate rejected Hochul's nomination of Appellate Division, Second Department Presiding Justice Hector LaSalle for chief judge on Feb. 15, by a 39-20 vote. It was the first time that a gubernatorial appointment to the state's highest court had ever been rejected by the Senate.

—Brian Lee