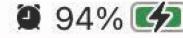Republican Judge Denise Collins, one of Harris County's most senior judges, has presided in the 208th Criminal District Court for 25 years. Voters first elected her in 1992 and have returned her to the bench six times. She is seeking a seventh full term in 2018.

Judge Collins was born and raised in North Carolina. She moved to Texas in the early 1970s. As she likes to say, she got to Texas as fast as she could.

Judge Collins received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of North Carolina and, after moving to Texas, worked as a counselor for troubled girls. She wanted to teach so she obtained a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Houston. During that time, she also worked at the law school there as a receptionist and secretary.

She then got a job teaching history to inner city junior high students and subsequently decided to attend what was then the Bates College of Law at UH at night. After putting herself through law school and, with six years of teaching under her belt, she received her law license in May 1983 and entered private practice.

In 1992, she challenged a Democratic gubernatorial judicial appointee to the 208th Criminal District Court who was chosen to fill an unexpired term. She won and went on to earn full four-year terms to the bench in 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014.

Judge Collins became the first judge in Harris County to use polygraph tests to monitor sex offenders and also became a guest lecturer on sex offenders throughout the nation. She was also an active speaker on local criminal justice issues and a leader in forming probation policy and advocating for an adult boot camp program for young offenders.

Judge Collins continues to be a strong voice for efficient and fair court operations as she works with her colleagues to fashion a budget for the courts. She has also helped guide the courts through the post-Hurricane Harvey era as the criminal justice system struggles with crippled facilities.