

Court Information Release



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Former Chief Judge Rubén Castillo to Retire on September 27, 2019

Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer announced today that District Judge Rubén Castillo will retire from the bench effective September 27, 2019.

“Judge Castillo has diligently served our court for more than twenty-five years, including his six years as chief judge. On behalf of the court, I want to thank Judge Castillo for his many contributions to this court, this community, and this nation—in particular, his efforts to champion diversity within the legal profession and his wise and compassionate leadership of our court,” said Chief Judge Pallmeyer.

Judge Castillo was nominated to the bench by President Bill Clinton on January 27, 1994. He was confirmed by the Senate on May 6, 1994, and received his commission on May 9, 1994, becoming the first Latino federal judge in Illinois. Judge Castillo served as vice chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission from 1999 to 2010. From July 2013 through July 2019, Judge Castillo served as Chief Judge, becoming the first Latino to hold this position in the district.

Judge Castillo presided over thousands of cases, many newsworthy. Judge Castillo oversaw the \$100 million settlement of the largest antitrust fine in history involving price fixing by Archer Daniels Midland officials. He oversaw the sentencing of Near North Brokerage insurance broker Michael Segal, who was convicted of embezzlement, fraud, and racketeering. Judge Castillo approved a \$900,000 settlement between the Village of Mount Prospect, Illinois and three Hispanic police officers who accused the village of racial profiling and employment discrimination. In a recent ruling, Judge Castillo ruled that false drug stash house rings tinged with racial overtones should be discontinued.

Throughout his service as chief, Judge Castillo made diversity a priority. With the goal of achieving greater jury diversity, he led efforts to enhance the court's jury plan to cast a wider net of potential jurors. He initiated the court's first Women's Symposium in 2016, attended by over 500 attorneys, and a second symposium of its kind in 2018, both of which created a space for the legal community to promote strategies and best practices to empower women as lead counsel and trial counsel in litigation.

Under his leadership, in 2018 the court hosted the inaugural "State of Latinos in the Law Symposium." Academic, legal, public policy experts, and three of the nation's Hispanic chief judges addressed the root cause of challenges Latinx face in the legal profession, their educational journey, and their career cycles and explored strategies and recommendations to empower stakeholders to effectively address and resolve those underlying conditions.

Judge Castillo advocated the court's engagement with the district's youth through the creation of the court's "Courtroom as a Classroom," a program which invited high school students from low income communities to the courthouse to meet with judges, lawyers, law enforcement officers, court employees to learn about career opportunities in law and law enforcement.

With a guiding philosophy of smart compassion, Judge Castillo expanded the court's Second C.H.A.N.C.E. re-entry program and established the Sentencing Options that Achieve Results (SOAR) program. Established in October 2016, SOAR provides an alternative to incarceration for federal pretrial defendants through treatment, sanction alternatives, and incentives to reinforce positive behavior.

As chief, Judge Castillo fostered an era of technological enhancement, including equipping courtrooms with state-of-the art evidence presentations systems. Judge Castillo led the court through periods of great challenge, including the federal shutdowns in 2013 and 2018-19. And Judge Castillo spearheaded the year-long celebration of the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the federal court in the state of Illinois.

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