

## Court Information Release



United States District Court  
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division  
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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### **District Court Hosts Judicial Firsts: Trailblazers on the Federal Bench**

Chicago, Ill.- As part of the yearlong celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Federal Courts in Illinois, today the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois hosted “Judicial Firsts: Trailblazers on the Federal Bench.”

“On our Court’s bicentennial, we reflect on the shattered ceilings and broken barriers of those who have served on our Court. We also recognize the challenging work ahead of us as we strive for true diversity in our profession and on the federal bench,” said Chief Judge Rubén Castillo.

Panelists included the following individuals:

- Chief Judge Rubén Castillo, first Hispanic Chief Judge in the Northern District of Illinois
- Judge Edmond E. Chang, first Asian-Pacific American Article III federal judge in Illinois
- Judge Thomas M. Durkin, discussed Hon. Stanley Roszkowski, the first full-time district court judge in the Western Division of the Northern District of Illinois
- Judge Ilana Diamond Rovner, first woman judge appointed to the Seventh Circuit
- Judge Susan Pierson Sonderby (Ret.), first woman appointed as a Bankruptcy Judge and as a Chief Bankruptcy Judge in the Seventh Circuit
- Judge Ann Claire Williams (Ret.), first woman judge of color to serve in a district court within the Seventh Circuit and the first judge of color appointed to the Seventh Circuit
- Attorney Willoughby Anderson, discussed some of the first federal judges appointed in Illinois
- Judge Geraldine Soat Brown (Ret.), moderator

Panelists reflected on their experiences in their judicial positions, including the reactions of lawyers, colleagues, and the community to their judicial appointments. Panelists also highlighted the role of mentorship in their careers and addressed diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.

The panel was presented by the Northern District of Illinois Court Historical Association, the Seventh Circuit Bar Association, and the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

Illinois federal court is where a young Abraham Lincoln argued that trains - not steamships - were America's future. Chicago is where Al Capone met his downfall, and the Mafia's "family secrets" were disclosed. "Days of Rage" played out in the Chicago Conspiracy trial - where Abbie Hoffman butted heads with Judge Julius Hoffman and Bobby Seale was bound and gagged. Illinois federal court is where thousands of individuals have taken the oath to become U.S. citizens; where everyday people pursue the ideals enshrined in the U.S. Constitution; and where dramas, big and small, play out every day.

Future events honoring the Bicentennial of Federal Courts in Illinois can be found at [www.ilnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov)



Left to right: Willoughby Anderson, Judge Durkin, Judge Williams (Ret.), Judge Castillo, Judge Rovner, Judge Chang, Judge Sonderby (Ret.), Judge Brown (Ret.)

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