

After a Year on the Bench, Judge Albert Berry III Is Formally Honored at Dirksen



Judge Albert Berry III addresses crowd during his Investiture Ceremony on June 12, 2026. Photo: Jim Slonoff

For the past year, Judge Albert Berry III has been doing the work - hearing cases, managing disputes and serving the public from the bench at the Dirksen Courthouse.

On Friday, the Court paused to make it official.

Family, friends, colleagues, members of the bench and bar, and court staff gathered for Judge Berry's investiture ceremony, a formal recognition of the role he has already been carrying out as a United States Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

Chief Judge Virginia M. Kendall placed the moment in the broader life of the Court as a reminder of the shared purpose that brings lawyers, judges and court staff together.

“You’ll often hear people refer to us as the court family,” Chief Judge Kendall said. “It’s everyone involved, and ceremonies like this are significant because of the public grant of authority to the new judge and because these ceremonies remind us that despite the challenging legal struggles that we witness in our courthouse each day, we are joined together today - both counsel and court - in a common effort to resolve human disputes by providing justice fairly, impartially, and in accordance with the law.”



Judge Sara Ellis and Chief Judge Virginia M. Kendall participate in the ceremony as Judge Young B. Kim and Judge Beth Jantz look on. Photo: Jim Slonoff



Former Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Edenfield, Judge Berry's former supervisor, addresses crowd during ceremony. Photo: Jim Slonoff

Judge Sara Ellis administered the oath of office. Chief Judge Kendall then presented Judge Berry with a gavel and block, an American flag that will be displayed in his courtroom, and his docket.

The symbols were ceremonial, but their meaning was immediate: the authority of the Court, the Constitution and rule of law, and the daily work of resolving disputes that affect real people's lives.

That human dimension ran through the ceremony, especially in remarks from Judge Berry's children, **Dante Berry and Maya Berry**.

"I believe a successful judge requires thoughtfulness and, at the very least, the smallest bit of sympathy," **Dante Berry** said. "It is important to put yourself in the shoes of both the defendant and the victim in order to make the most informed decisions."

Then, with pride and humor, he looked even further ahead.

"Please continue to keep pushing forward, and with enough time and effort, Maya and I will be giving this exact same speech when you are sworn in as a Supreme Court Justice," Dante said.

Maya Berry spoke about her father's persistence and the example he has set for his family.

"If you are walking down the right path and you are willing to keep walking, eventually you will make progress," Maya said. "Over the course of our lifetime, our father has worked for and seized every opportunity he has come across, all for the sake of achieving the dream he has reached today."

Former United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois John Lausch also reflected on Judge Berry's years as an Assistant United States Attorney, describing the judgment and temperament that shaped his work as a prosecutor and now guide his work on the bench.

"He is appropriately deliberative without overthinking," Lausch said. "He has great judgment, which I saw, and many of the people in this room saw over the years, work to his benefit while he served us all as an Assistant United States Attorney."

"These are the same qualities that certainly have served him well as a judge in this courthouse over the last year, and will continue to do so as a judge in this courthouse," Lausch said.



Former U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois John Lausch speaks during Judge Albert Berry III's investiture ceremony.

Photo: Jim Slonoff

Judge Berry, reflecting on his own path to the bench, spoke about the impact public service can have beyond the courtroom. He recalled what he described as the best thanks he ever received as a federal prosecutor - though it was not directed at him personally.

He told the story of a woman who had lived in Chicago's Englewood community for decades, raising her children and grandchildren there. The neighborhood, he said, had changed as people stayed out late into the night and gunfire became part of daily life. After a prosecution helped improve conditions in the area, the woman was asked how things felt.

Her answer, Judge Berry said, captured why he wanted to be a federal prosecutor.

"She simply said, 'My friends and I can go back on the porch and play cards again,'" Judge Berry said.

As a United States Magistrate Judge, Judge Berry handles a broad range of civil and criminal matters, including pretrial proceedings, settlement conferences, discovery disputes, initial appearances and other matters referred by district judges.

Friday's ceremony was both a formal recognition and a celebration of continued service. With his family beside him and colleagues looking on, Judge Berry accepted the oath and the responsibilities of serving the public as a member of the federal judiciary.

The Court congratulates Judge Albert Berry III and celebrates his continued service to the Northern District of Illinois.

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