

Court Information Release



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

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U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Bar Associations Honor Black History Month with “Lift Every Voice” Panel and Celebration

CHICAGO, Ill.- On February 26, 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, in partnership with the Black Women Lawyers’ Association of Greater Chicago, Inc., the Cook County Bar Association, and the Black Men Lawyers’ Association, hosted a special program titled “Lift Every Voice” in honor of Black History Month.

“This is the first time our district has hosted an event dedicated to celebrating the Black judges of this court. Today we honor the notable historic firsts in our district and the remarkable contributions of the 19 Black judges who have served in the Northern District of Illinois,” said Chief Judge Virginia M. Kendall.

The event celebrated the diversity on the federal bench and acknowledged the accomplishments that led to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois being named as Chicago Lawyer’s 2024 “Person of the Year.” The program featured live musical selections, Black history trivia questions, and a panel discussion.

District Judges Sharon Johnson Coleman and LaShonda Hunt emceed and helped spearhead the event. Panelists included the Hon. David Coar (retired), who served this district for nearly 25 years and chaired the merit selection committee of Senators Durbin and Duckworth, the Hon. Frank Valderrama, the first Panamanian American to serve as an Article III judge in this district, and the Hon. Jeannice Appenteng, the first African American woman to serve as a magistrate judge in this district. The panel was moderated by Daniel Cotter, the Emmy-nominated co-producer of “Bridging the Divide,” who served as Chicago Bar Association President from 2014-2015 and is currently at Dickenson Wright.

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Photos by Alice Sanchez.