

Court Information Release



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

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Contact: Julie Hodek, Public Information Officer
United States District Court for
the Northern District of Illinois
219 S. Dearborn St., #2548
Chicago, IL 60604
312-613-5204

Bankruptcy Court for Northern District of Illinois now leads nation in most bankruptcy filings

Chicago, Ill. – The Bankruptcy Court for Northern District of Illinois now leads the nation with the most filings of any bankruptcy court in the country. With 47,535 case filings in the 12-month period ending March 31, 2016, the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois has overtaken the Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, which had 44,941 filings in the same period.

“We are so proud of the work of our dedicated bench and outstanding court staff, who will continue to excel as the backbone of the busiest bankruptcy courthouse in the country,” said Chief Bankruptcy Judge Bruce W. Black.

In April, the Administrative Office for the U.S. Courts announced that nationally bankruptcy filings fell 8.5% in the 12-month period ending March 31, 2016. Though filings in the Northern District of Illinois have also fallen, the drop-off has been less significant, with only a 6.6% decrease in total filings during the same 12-month period. In fact, the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois experienced an increase in total Chapter 13 filings during that 12-month period.

“The Bankruptcy Court in the Northern District of Illinois is one of the hardest-working Bankruptcy Courts in the country. We commend their efficiency as they now handle the most case filings in the country with just eleven judges,” said Chief Judge for the Northern District of Illinois Rubén Castillo.

The Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, which now ranks second in case filings nationally, is authorized twenty-four judgeships while the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois is only authorized ten. The number of bankruptcy judges is

determined by Congress. In addition, the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit may recall a retired judge for further service to the court. With ten authorized judgeships and one recall judge, the number of judges for the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois now totals eleven.

All bankruptcy cases are handled in federal courts under rules outlined in the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. The primary purposes of the federal bankruptcy laws are to give an honest debtor, either a person or a business, a “fresh start” in life by relieving the debtor of most debts, and to repay creditors in an orderly manner to the extent that the debtor has property available for payment.

There are ninety U.S. Bankruptcy Courts, which, by statute, are units of the U.S. District Courts. A U.S. bankruptcy judge presides over a bankruptcy case. The judge is appointed to a 14-year term by the judges of the local U.S. Court of Appeals and can be reappointed.

The Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois is comprised of the Eastern Division and Western Division. With court locations in Chicago, Joliet, Rockford, Lake County and Geneva, the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois stretches across 18 counties, covering an area of nearly 10,100 square miles, with a population of 9.3 million people.

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