

Court Information Release



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Chief Judge Castillo announces he will step down as Chief Judge, making way for Judge Pallmeyer, the district's first female Chief Judge

Chicago, Ill. - On International Women's Day (March 8) 2019, Chief Rubén Judge Castillo, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, announced his decision to step down as Chief Judge, ushering the way for the first woman to serve as the Court's Chief Judge, Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

"As I reflect on the 200th anniversary of our Court and on this International Women's Day, I'm delighted to make way for the Northern District of Illinois to be led by its first female Chief Judge, Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer. I am extremely pleased to be followed by someone who so deeply loves our Court," said Judge Castillo.

"On a personal note, my service as your Chief Judge has been a privilege and an honor for this poor kid from the West Side of Chicago to lead one of the busiest and arguably the hardest-working court in the nation," Judge Castillo added.

Chief Judge Castillo grew up in Chicago's West Town neighborhood to immigrant parents, his father from Mexico and his mother from Puerto Rico. The first in his family to attend college, Judge Castillo received his undergraduate degree from Loyola University Chicago in 1976, and his law degree from Northwestern University School of Law in 1979. Upon graduating from Northwestern, Judge Castillo joined Jenner & Block LLP as an associate attorney until 1984, when he joined the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois. In 1988, he left the U.S. Attorney's Office to serve as regional counsel of Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF).

In 1991, he returned to private practice as a partner at the Chicago law firm of Kirkland & Ellis LLP, and he 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. On July 1, 2013, Judge Castillo began his service as chief judge, becoming the first Latino to hold this position in the district.

Judge Pallmeyer was born in Tokyo, Japan. She was nominated to the federal bench by President Bill Clinton on July 31, 1997. She was confirmed by the Senate on October 21, 1998 and received her commission on October 22, 1998. Prior to becoming a District Judge, Judge Pallmeyer served as U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of Illinois from 1991 to 1998. From 1986 to 1991, she served as an administrative law judge for the Illinois Human Rights Commission. She worked in private practice from 1980 to 1985 and served as law clerk to Hon. Rosalie E. Wahl, Minnesota Supreme Court, from 1979 to 1980. Judge Pallmeyer earned her undergraduate degree from Valparaiso University in 1976 and her law degree from the University of Chicago Law School in 1979.

Under federal law, a court's chief judge vacancy is filled by the district judge with the most seniority, who has not yet reached age 65. The law allows the chief judge to serve up to seven years or until he/she reaches age 70, whichever comes first.

Judge Castillo's last day as Chief Judge will be June 30, 2019, and Judge Pallmeyer will succeed him on July 1, 2019.

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