



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
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Chief Judge Castillo honored at Hispanic Lawyers Association Gala

Chicago, Ill. - On Friday, June 21, 2019, Chief Judge Rubén Castillo was awarded the Aguila Award for his judicial career and six years as chief judge at the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI) Gala. Judge Castillo, the son of immigrant parents – his father from Mexico and his mother from Puerto Rico – was the first Hispanic U.S. District Judge in the Northern District of Illinois and the first Hispanic Chief Judge to lead the district.

Shortly after Judge Castillo's appointment to the district court in 1994, Judge Castillo was nominated as Vice Chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission, becoming the first Hispanic judge to serve in that role. As Vice Chair, Judge Castillo, voted his support for eliminating mandatory minimums, which disproportionately affect African-Americans.

Among his accomplishments as chief, Judge Castillo has made diversity a priority. With the goal of achieving greater jury diversity, he has led efforts to enhance the Court's jury plan to cast a wider net of potential jurors.

Under his leadership, in 2018, the Court hosted the first "State of Latinos in the Law Symposium." Academic, legal, public policy experts, and three of the nation's Hispanic chief judges addressed the root cause of challenges Latinx face in the legal profession, their educational journey, and their career cycles and explored strategies and recommendations to empower stakeholders to effectively address and resolve those underlying conditions.

Judge Castillo initiated the Court's first Women's Symposium in 2016, attended by over 500 attorneys, and a second symposium of its kind in 2018, both of which created a space for the legal community to promote strategies and best practices to empower women as lead counsel and trial counsel in litigation.

On International Women’s Day (March 8) 2019, Chief Judge Castillo announced his decision to step down early as Chief Judge, ushering the way for the first woman to serve as the court’s Chief Judge, Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer. Judge Castillo’s last day as Chief Judge will be June 30, 2019.

The Aguila Award is the HLAI’s highest honor, presented annually to that member of the legal community who has demonstrated leadership and service to the community.

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Photo by Miguel Zuno, Zuno Photography