

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 select Jeffrey Cummings and Sunil Harjani to serve as U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of Illinois

CHICAGO, Ill.- Chief Judge Rubén Castillo announced today that the U.S. District Court selected Jeffrey Cummings and Sunil Harjani to be the next United States Magistrate Judges for the Northern District of Illinois. Mr. Cummings and Mr. Harjani will fill the next two vacancies on the magistrate judge bench in Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Cummings has been designated to fill the first available vacancy and Mr. Harjani will join the Court for the second vacancy.

“Mr. Cummings and Mr. Harjani will be excellent additions to the Court,” said Chief Judge Castillo. “The magistrate judges in the Northern District of Illinois have been key in our District’s ability to effectively manage our significant caseload. We are confident that Mr. Cummings and Mr. Harjani will complement our distinguished colleagues on the magistrate judge bench.”

Mr. Jeffrey Cummings graduated from Northwestern University School of Law in 1987 where he was a member of the Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology. From 1987 to 1989 he clerked for then District Judge Ann Williams in the Northern District of Illinois, following which he joined Miner Barnhill & Galland, PC where he continues to work. Mr. Cummings has been a lecturer and speaker on such issues as voting rights, police accountability, and the federal rules of civil procedure. He was a guest lecturer at Notre Dame Law School and has taught trial advocacy at Northwestern Law School.

At Miner Barnhill & Galland, PC, Mr. Cummings has achieved a breadth of experience handling cases dealing with employment discrimination, civil rights, the Voting Rights Act, Section 1983 excessive force, housing discrimination, First Amendment, False Claims Act, and a variety of commercial litigation including breach of contract, tortious interference with a contract, fraud and consumer fraud. He has served as a hearing officer for the Chicago Police Board and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. During his 30-year legal career, Mr. Cummings has been a speaker and panelist at several bar and community events addressing topics including the Voting Rights Act to civil procedures and appellate issues.

Mr. Sunil Harjani graduated from Northwestern University School of Law in 2000. He has been an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois since 2008. Currently, he is Deputy Chief of the Securities and Commodities Fraud Section. He handles complex matters including commercial commodities fraud, market manipulation, and other complex investigations, and supervises other AUSA's in the office. From 2004 to 2008, Mr. Harjani served as a Senior Attorney with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission where he was responsible for the investigation and prosecution of federal civil securities law violations.

Early in his career, Mr. Harjani was a litigation associate with the law firm of Jenner & Block LLP in Chicago for approximately 2 ½ years. Mr. Harjani also previously served as a law clerk to Judge Suzanne B. Conlon. Mr. Harjani is an Adjunct Professor at the Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law. Mr. Harjani has become a certified mediator through Northwestern's Center for Conflict Resolution and has put those skills into practice by volunteering his time on a pro-bono basis as a certified mediator with the Cook County Circuit Court. Mr. Harjani has received prestigious awards from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, and the United States Postal Inspection.

The selection of a magistrate judge is governed by statute and by regulations adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States. The process included the work of the district's Merit Selection Panel, which screened and interviewed candidates and made a recommendation to the district judges of ten applicants it found best qualified from more than one hundred and seventy applicants. The Panel comprised of both attorneys and non-attorneys was chaired by Patricia Brown Holmes. Members of the Panel included Mr. Ricardo Estrada, Mr. Joseph M. Gagliardo, Ms. Marisel A. Hernandez, Hon. Arlander Keys (ret.), Ms. Spiridoula (Litza) Mavrothalasitis, Mr. Samuel S. Park, Ms. Esther Franco-Payne, Mr. Stephen H. Pugh, Mr. Sergio F. Rodriguez, Ms. Zalwaynaka (Z) Scott, Ms. Natalie J. Spears, and Mr. Nigel Telman.

The magistrate judge position requires a minimum of five years as a member in good standing of the bar of the highest court of a state and at least five years of active practice of law. The term of office for a magistrate judge is eight years, with the opportunity to renew the appointment for additional terms.

Magistrate judges perform a variety of duties for the court, including conducting preliminary proceedings in federal criminal cases and the trial and disposition of federal misdemeanor cases upon consent of the litigants. They conduct various pretrial matters and evidentiary proceedings upon referral from a district judge of the court and the trial and disposition of federal civil cases upon consent of the litigants.

The Northern District of Illinois was just approved by the Judicial Conference to add two additional magistrate judges, one position in the Eastern Division and a second position in the Western Division. Applications are currently being sought and interested attorneys can apply online at www.ilnd.uscourts.gov. With twenty-two authorized district judgeships, the U.S. District for the Northern District of Illinois is the third largest district court in the U.S. 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.