

Court Information Release



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U.S. District Court Opens Court's First Museum and History Center in Dirksen U.S. Courthouse

Chicago, Ill. – Today the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois opened its new museum and history center in the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in Chicago at a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“It is an exciting day for our court to dedicate public space that allows members of our community to learn about and reflect upon the profound impact this court has made on our district and nation,” said Chief Judge Rubén Castillo.

Chief Judge Castillo; U.S. District Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer; U.S. District Judge Charles P. Kocoras; Clerk of Court Thomas G. Bruton; Martin V. Sinclair, Jr., President of the Northern District of Illinois Court Historical Association; and Gretchen Van Dam, Northern District of Illinois Court Historical Association Vice President/Archivist, cut the ribbon to the twenty-first floor public museum. Through artifacts, art, documents, and interactive video presentations, the museum highlights the court's history as it approaches its 200th anniversary in 2019. Chief Judge Castillo presided over a ceremony in which he and former Chief Judges Marvin E. Aspen and Charles P. Kocoras and U.S. District Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer offered brief remarks.

For almost 200 years, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois is where key cases on civil rights, public corruption, organized crime, and other important issues have been decided. Famous trials include that of mob boss Al Capone, the trial of the “Chicago Seven,” the Greylord Cook County judicial corruption trials, and the trials of four Illinois governors. James Benton Parsons, the first African-American to serve as a federal judge in U.S. District Court, served in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, including service as the district's chief judge.

The new museum has space to host lectures, with a number of upcoming lectures planned to celebrate the court's 200th anniversary. Each year the court welcomes thousands of visitors including Chicago area high schoolers, law students and lawyers, and international delegations of attorneys and judges.

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.

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