

Court Information Release



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

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the Northern District of Illinois
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Media Advisory

Chief Judge Castillo to speak at “The Pope & John Lecture Series on Professionalism” at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law

Where: Northwestern Pritzker School of Law
Lincoln Hall
375 East Chicago Ave
Chicago, Illinois 60611

When: Monday, March 18, 2019
Lecture begins at 12:00 p.m.

What: In remarks entitled “Reflections After Four Decades as a Trial Judge/Trial Attorney: Significant Changes and Changes I Would Want to See in the Future,” Chief Judge Rubén Castillo will deliver the “Pope & John Lecture” at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law.

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.

Throughout his service 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. He 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.

Under his leadership, in 2018 the Court hosted the inaugural "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 has advocated the Court's engagement with the district's youth through the creation of the Court's "Courtroom as a Classroom," a program which invites high school students from low income communities to the courthouse to meet with judges, lawyers, law enforcement officers, court employees to learn about career opportunities in law and law enforcement.

With a guiding philosophy of smart compassion, Judge Castillo expanded the Court's Second C.H.A.N.C.E. re-entry program and called for the establishment of the Sentencing Options that Achieve Results (SOAR) program. Established in October 2016, SOAR provides an alternative to incarceration for federal pretrial defendants through treatment, sanction alternatives, and incentives to reinforce positive behavior.

As Chief, Judge Castillo fostered an era of technological enhancement, including equipping courtrooms with state-of-the art evidence presentations systems. Judge Castillo also led the Court through periods of great challenge, including the federal shutdowns in 2013 and 2018-19.

The Pope & John Lecture Series on Professionalism, which focuses on the many dimensions of a lawyer's professional responsibility, including legal ethics, public service, professional civility, pro bono representation, and standards of conduct, was established in 1991 by the Chicago firm of Pope & John Ltd.

RSVP required: Credentialed members of the media who wish to attend should contact Julie Hodek at julie_hodek@ilnd.uscourts.gov in advance of the event.