

Court Information Release



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

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Magistrate Judge Maria Valdez appointed presiding magistrate judge as Presiding Magistrate Judge Geraldine Soat Brown's second two-year term comes to an end

CHICAGO, Ill. - Today Presiding Magistrate Judge Geraldine Soat Brown passes the torch to Magistrate Judge Maria Valdez who will assume the role of presiding magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

"On behalf of the court, I would like to extend congratulations to Judge Valdez. With a distinguished career as an attorney and federal magistrate judge, Judge Valdez will continue to be an asset to the Northern District of Illinois in her new role as presiding magistrate judge," said Chief Judge Rubén Castillo.

Judge Valdez was appointed to the federal magistrate bench in 2005. Prior to becoming a federal magistrate judge, Judge Valdez was the Chicago Regional Counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), concentrating her trial and appellate practice in the areas of constitutional law and the federal Voting Rights Act. She began her legal career in 1988 as a federal public defender in Los Angeles, California, representing indigent criminal defendants. Judge Valdez also worked as a senior associate at the law firm of Hughes, Socol, Piers, Resnick & Dym in Chicago, where she specialized in civil rights. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of California at Los Angeles and her law degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

Judge Valdez will take on the duties carried out by Presiding Magistrate Judge Brown for the last four years. In 2012, then-Chief Judge James Holderman appointed Judge Brown to a two-

year term as presiding magistrate judge. In 2014, Chief Judge Castillo re-appointed her to a second term.

“I would like to thank Judge Brown for her exemplary service and tremendous contribution to the course of justice she provided as presiding magistrate judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois,” said Chief Judge Castillo.

Judge Brown was appointed to the federal magistrate bench in 2000. Prior to her appointment to the bench, Judge Brown practiced law in Chicago for 25 years, concentrating her practice in the area of commercial and construction litigation and alternative dispute resolution. She also served as a member of the Federal Defender Panel and was an adjunct Professor of Law at Chicago-Kent Law School, teaching courses on negotiation, mediation and arbitration. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Dayton and her law degree from the University of Chicago Law School.

Pursuant to the court’s Internal Operating Procedures, the presiding magistrate judge is appointed by the chief judge of the District Court for a term of two years. Historically, magistrate judges have been nominated for more than one consecutive term, but have stepped-down after serving two terms as presiding magistrate judge.

Presiding magistrate judges coordinate the activities of the district’s magistrate judges, make duty assignments, monitor magistrate judge workloads, regularly meet with the chief district judge, and maintain liaison with the district judges and other court officers.

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.

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