

## Court Information Release



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

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United States District Court for  
the Northern District of Illinois  
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Chicago, IL 60604  
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**Federal Bar Association and NIU College of Law partner to launch Prisoners' Rights Project**  
*NIU law students to aid inmates with civil rights lawsuits in federal court in Rockford*

Rockford, Ill. - Today the Northern Illinois University College of Law and the P. Michael Mahoney (Rockford, IL) Chapter of the Federal Bar Association announced the launch of the Prisoners' Rights Project, a project in which NIU law students will represent inmates incarcerated at various correctional facilities in civil rights lawsuits filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Western Division, in Rockford.

"This historic partnership is a win-win for our community. The Prisoners' Rights Project provides prisoners with civil rights lawsuits, who in most cases would otherwise be representing themselves, the benefit of free legal representation. At the same time, it provides NIU law students the opportunity to gain meaningful hands-on experience in federal court," said U.S. Magistrate Judge Iain Johnston, current president of the Mahoney Chapter of the FBA

"Our court is proud to support this innovative project that will provide much needed assistance to pro se prisoner litigants," said Judge Rubén Castillo, Chief Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Beginning in the fall semester 2018, Northern Illinois University College of Law will offer third year law students the opportunity to participate in this hands-on learning and service experience. Participating students will be allowed to try the cases in federal court under the supervision of an experienced civil rights trial attorney.

The project is the result of an effort by the members of the P. Michael Mahoney (Rockford, IL) Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and the NIU College of Law and is supported by a generous grant provided by the Foundation of the Federal Bar Association. Magistrate Judge Iain Johnston of the federal district court will act as the liaison between the court and the NIU College of Law. Associate Dean Marc Falkoff of the College of Law has worked on behalf of the NIU College of Law in making the project a reality.

In 2017, 150 civil rights lawsuits involving inmates incarcerated at various correctional facilities were filed in the Western Division of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, up 50% from 2015.

The voluntary membership of the Federal Bar Association works, “to strengthen the federal legal system and administration of justice by serving the interests and the needs of federal practitioners, judges and the public they serve.” The Mahoney Chapter of the FBA, named after now-retired U.S. Magistrate Judge P. Michael Mahoney, encompasses the Western Division.

The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois serves eighteen northern Illinois counties, including both Cook and Winnebago. The Court has two divisions, with the Eastern Division located in Chicago and the Western in Rockford. The Chicago Chapter of the FBA serves the Eastern Division.

The College of Law at NIU is located in DeKalb on the university’s main campus and is a fully accredited, nationally recognized law school.

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Attorney Jana Brady (FBA Chapter Treasurer), Magistrate Judge Iain Johnston (FBA Chapter President), Attorney Jordan Emmert, Dean Marc D. Falkoff (NIU School of Law), Interim Dean Mark Cordes (NIU School of Law )

Photo provided by FBA.