

**PUBLIC STATEMENT BY CHIEF JUDGE RUBÉN CASTILLO**  
**ON THE OCCASION OF THE COURT'S 200TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Today, the Court at the heart of America – the Northern District of Illinois – is celebrating its 200th birthday. Today, in an unprecedented manner the judges of our Court are present in the public lobby of the courthouse in robes to share our 200th birthday with the general public. Today, we celebrate the 200th birthday of the rule of law in Illinois.

Everyday that our courthouse family comes to the public courthouse we recognize that we are entering hallowed ground.

It's hallowed ground because of all the dedicated court staff – judges and court staff, security personnel, who have proceeded us in their public service to their Court.

Our first judge, Nathaniel Pope, was appointed 200 years ago. He was nominated by President James Monroe on March 3, 1819 and was confirmed the same day. Don't we wish we could go back to that era? He had a dramatic impact on this great State and the City. Judge Pope had served as the territorial commissioner for the territory of Illinois prior to its admission as a State. He redrew the boundaries of this State to ensure that the land that would become Chicago would become part of the great State of Illinois.

Ninety-three women and men have followed Judge Pope by serving as Judges of our Court. All of them, like the judges currently standing behind me, have loved this Court. They love this Court because this is the place where they get to do the right thing. This is why this is hallowed ground. This is where the rule of law comes alive.

Besides Judge Pope, I do just want to mention one other historical figure in our Court's history – former Chief Judge James P. Parsons, who was appointed by President John F.

Kennedy as the first African-American federal judge in the entire country in 1961. Our ceremonial courtroom on the 25th floor of this building is dedicated to his great memory. On this special day, we have placed the only known oil portrait of our first judge, Nathaniel Pope, which was graciously lent to our Court by Judge Susan Myerscough from the Central District of Illinois, directly across from the James Parsons Ceremonial Courtroom.

Our Court is the court where Lincoln and Darrow argued cases. Our Court often times serves as the great equalizer. No one who comes into any of our courtrooms can ask or demand any special treatment because of their career or class status. The poorest person and the richest most powerful person will be treated in the same equal fashion by our judges.

When Chicago faced discriminatory patterns of public housing, segregation in its public schools, public corruption at all levels, judges on this Court did the right thing on this hallowed ground.

When Chicago faced organized crimes ranging from the Al Capone days to violent street gangs and international drug trafficking gangs, judges on the Court did the right thing on this hallowed ground.

At times, doing the right thing involves risk to our Court family – our staff, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges – but we still do the right thing.

This is hallowed ground because two our security personnel – CSO Harry Belluomini, age 58, and Deputy Marshal Roy Frakes, age 30 – died on this ground defending our Court.

We acknowledge that we have had tough moments on these hallowed grounds.

Personally, I wish any politician who was contemplating corrupting his or her office, would realize that our Court's history includes a day when then U.S. Attorney James Thompson took the elevator to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals and informed then sitting Court of Appeals Judge Otto Kerner that he had just been indicted for his financial dealings while previously serving as the Governor of the State of Illinois. If more current politicians were aware of this history, they would not assume they are somehow immune from prosecution.

Certainly, our Court has learned from its own historic mistakes. The sad day defendant Bobby Seal was bound and gagged during The Chicago Seven trial will not be repeated on this hallowed ground.

Today, we celebrate our history – relish the good and learn from the bad. The critical point is that the Rule of Law has survived and reached its 200th birthday. We especially invite our younger residents of our district to visit our new Court History Museum, which is free and open to the public on the 21st floor of this Courthouse. Our children are our future and they need to become familiar with our Court's history and perhaps consider a future path that will aid the Rule of Law.

The work of this Court is public and transparent and can be observed for free. Our trials and proceedings are great free entertainment. We remain hopeful that in this special 200th year, many residents of our district will pay a visit to this hallowed ground and our Court will hold a series of yearlong events starting on March 20, 2019, when we will honor various trailblazers on the federal bench.

March 1, 2019