

Court Information Release



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Chief Judge Kendall delivers her first “State of the Court” Address

CHICAGO, Ill. — On July 8, 2025, Chief Judge Virginia M. Kendall delivered the 2025 Annual State of the Court Address, her first such address as Chief, at a luncheon sponsored by the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. Judge Virginia M. Kendall was sworn in as Chief Judge on August 1, 2024.

Judge Kendall shared that the Court was saddened by the death of one of its beloved colleagues, Judge Joel Flaum. He was appointed to the district court in 1974 and served in this district until 1983, when he was elevated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Judge Flaum served as chief judge of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals from 2000 to 2006.

Judge Kendall highlighted the numerous additions to both the district and magistrate benches. On August 23, 2024, Judge Georgia N. Alexakis was sworn in as U.S. District Judge, filling the vacancy created when Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer assumed senior status. On November 20, 2024, Judge April Perry was sworn in as U.S. District Judge, filling the seat vacated by Judge Nancy Maldonado, who was elevated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

In January 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge M. David Weisman was appointed Chief Magistrate Judge when Chief Magistrate Judge Young B. Kim completed his term in that position. On September 30, 2024, Judge Daniel P. McLaughlin was sworn in as U.S. Magistrate Judge, filling the vacancy created when Judge Sunil Harjani was elevated to the district court bench. On November 1, 2024, Judge Laura K. McNally was sworn in as U.S. Magistrate Judge, filling the vacancy created when Judge Sheila Finnegan retired. On May 5, 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge Albert Berry III was sworn in and filled the vacancy created when Judge Jeffrey Cole retired. On May 30, 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael Iasparro was sworn in and sits in the Western Division. Judge Iasparro filled the vacancy created when Magistrate Judge Lisa Jensen retired.

Judge Kendall also reported that from July 2024 to May 2025, 28,351 individuals were sworn in as new citizens in our district including at ceremonies at special venues throughout the district including: Cantigny Park,

Chicago Botanic Gardens, Coronado Theater, Guaranteed Rate Field, Midway International Airport, Museum of Science & Industry, Rialto Theater, Wintrust Arena, and Wrigley Field.

Judge Kendall highlighted recent courthouse improvements. The federal judiciary recently underwent an upgrade of its accounting system that prevented the normal issuance of paper checks for jury service. To ensure that grand jurors and petit jurors continued to receive payment for their service over the course of the upgrade, the Court piloted a program that provided jurors with payment through a debit card. The Court also installed new security cameras at Dirksen Courthouse and implemented a new visitor management system at both of the district's courthouses. The Court debuted new digital information boards in the lobby of Dirksen Courthouse in February and revamped its website in April 2025. In March 2025, the Court unveiled new engraved quote panels, beautifying the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse as part of the court-sponsored *Justice Inspired* contest. Northern District of Illinois kindergarten through grade 12 teachers were invited to engage their students in submitting quotes on behalf of their classes that were engraved onto panels and then installed on walls in public areas inside the courthouse. Former Chief Judge Pallmeyer spearheaded this project, which leaves a lasting impact on our courthouse.

As part of the Court's ongoing commitment to recognizing the histories and contributions of various communities, the Court has hosted a series of meaningful events throughout the year including a November 2024 panel and cultural presentation highlighting Native American history, resilience, traditions, and the history of voting rights for Native Americans. In February 2025, the Court honored Black History Month through the program "Lift Every Voice," featuring a panel discussion and celebration focused on African American voices, leadership, and legacy in law and justice. The Court marked Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month with a historical and legal discussion centered on the landmark Supreme Court case *U.S. v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898) explored the evolution, current challenges, and future of birthright citizenship and the 14th Amendment and a discussion and reenactment titled "*U.S. v. Wen Ho Lee, 25 Years Later...*," which examined the implications of the case on civil liberties, civil rights, and national security.

Rather than an individual, the *Chicago Lawyer* magazine named the transformed Northern District of Illinois and the people who operate it as its 2024 "Person of the Year." This recognizes the significant changes and advancements in the Northern District of Illinois.

Chief Judge Kendall concluded her remarks by addressing the ongoing attacks on the judiciary, noting that threats to the safety and lives of judges have increased significantly. She added that she is working with U.S. Marshal LaDon Reynolds to prioritize judicial security. All this, she noted, is happening while the court's budget remains frozen at the level it was two years ago. This stagnation persists, she noted, despite rising costs and despite critical needs: modernizing outdated computer systems to protect from cyber threats, and adequately funding the federal defender program, including panel attorneys who provide essential legal representation.

Despite these serious challenges, Judge Kendall affirmed her confidence in the resilience of the judiciary and that it will remain an independent and steadfast branch of government.

