

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
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Chief Judge Castillo delivers annual “State of the Court” Address

CHICAGO, Ill. – After asking for a moment of silence for law enforcement officers killed last night in Dallas and for all individuals who are victims of excessive violence, Chief Judge Rubén Castillo, delivered the State of the Court address at a luncheon sponsored by the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. Judge Castillo characterized the overall state of the court as “hard-working and compassionate.” He also noted that the court continues to be “engaged, secure and cost-cutting” as he reported the following:

The Northern District of Illinois now ranks second among all U.S. district courts for the number of total civil case filings. With 12,381 civil case filings in 2015, the Northern District of Illinois surpassed all but the Central District of California, which had 14,676 civil cases filed in 2015. In addition, 694 criminal cases were filed in the Northern District of Illinois in 2015, up 7.5% from 2014. The Northern District of Illinois also ranks fourth in the nation for the number of patent cases filed as the Patent Pilot Program reached its fifth year.

The Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois now leads the nation with the most filings of any bankruptcy court in the country. With 47,535 case filings in the 12-month period ending March 31, 2016, the Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois has overtaken the Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, which had 44,941 filings in the same period.

On January 27, 2016, Magistrate Judge Maria Valdez was appointed Presiding Magistrate Judge for a two-year term. Magistrate Judge Geraldine Soat Brown retired on June 15, 2016. The District Court selected M. David Weisman to fill the magistrate judge vacancy created by Magistrate Judge Brown’s retirement. On June 9, 2016, M. David Weisman entered duty as a magistrate judge and will have a public investiture ceremony on July 14, 2016.

Edward Gilmore was publicly sworn-in as U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Illinois on January 12, 2016.

In November 2015, the U.S. Probation Office relocated to an integrated mobile workspace in the Kluczynski Federal Building, a move which will save the Judiciary an estimated \$1.4 million in annual rent costs.

The court has approved an alternative sentencing program for pretrial defendants in the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division -- Sentencing Options that Achieve Results (SOAR). The program, which is a collaborative and historic initiative of the court, Pretrial Services, the Federal Defender's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office, will launch this fall.

In October 2015, the court conducted a survey of its Trial Bar members to identify opportunities for improvement and action. Survey participants noted that reimbursement for pro bono recruitments were not sufficient to cover expense and the need for more opportunity for judicial insight through education programs. In response to feedback from the survey, the court increased pro bono expense reimbursement, effective February 2016.

A number of improvements have been made to enhance courthouse facilities and technology. An attorney workroom on the courthouse's 23rd floor with work stations, lounge seating and a television is now available for attorney use. Twenty-seven courtrooms and jury rooms now have state-of-the-art evidence presentation systems, and an additional 21 courtrooms will be upgraded by end of calendar year 2017. A jury kiosk will be available later this year for jury self-check-in. Video conferencing units have been installed in the Dixon Correctional Center and in room 1554 of the Dirksen Courthouse for attorney use. In January 2016, the Clerk's Office launched a new court website.

The court has continued to expand its outreach efforts, such as judicial presentations and educational programs with bar associations and law schools. In April 2016, the court co-sponsored a historic symposium, "Women Lawyers in the Courtroom," which was attended by 450 attorneys. The chief judge and five district judges spoke on panels which addressed strategies and best practices to empower women as lead counsel and trial counsel in litigation. The court also launched a "Courtroom as Classroom" outreach program, in which sixty Chicago Public Schools students from the south and west sides of the city met with judicial employees to learn about career opportunities in the justice system.

The court has also expanded its series of outside speakers, including academic experts and judges from other countries, visiting the court in an effort to seek input that will assist the court.

Chief Judge Castillo noted that as he enters his fourth year as chief judge, the emphasis will be on innovation. Improving the diversity of juries and expanding the court's public outreach into inner city communities continue to be key priorities. He also said he plans to continue to drive technology and security improvements at the courthouse. With programs like the Pretrial SOAR program set to launch this fall, Chief Judge Castillo said he hopes that the court continues to lead with "smart compassion."

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Above: Chief Judge Castillo delivers the 2016 State of the Court Address.