



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

Release Date:
June 25, 2019

Contact: Julie Hodek, Public Information Officer
United States District Court for
the Northern District of Illinois
219 S. Dearborn St., #2548
Chicago, IL 60604
312-435-5693

Chief Judge Castillo Delivered His Final State of the Court Remarks

Chicago, Ill. – On June 25, 2019, Chief Judge Rubén Castillo delivered his sixth and final State of the Court remarks at a reception sponsored by the Federal Bar Association, Chicago Chapter. Judge Castillo reviewed major developments at the district court and reflected upon his six years as Chief Judge.

“My service as your Chief Judge has been a privilege and an honor for this poor kid from the West Side of Chicago. I am extraordinarily grateful for the incredible support and dedication of my colleagues on the bench, my chambers team, the entire court staff, and my family,” said Judge Castillo.

In 2018, 9,227 civil cases were filed in the Northern District of Illinois, down 7%. Criminal cases in 2018, were up 26% with 891 total criminal filings. Despite a record 35-day partial federal shutdown in December 2018 and early 2019, the court remained operational by relying on fees and “no-year funds.” The court entered Amended Order 19-00028, which held in abeyance all civil litigation involving as a party the U.S. and/or any party represented by the Department of Justice or the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Judiciary employees reported for work and received pay throughout the duration of the shutdown.

There are currently five district judge vacancies on the court. Three nominees – Magistrate Judge Mary M. Rowland, Martha M. Pacold, and Steven C. Seeger – are awaiting confirmation by the U.S. Senate. John F. Kness is awaiting official nomination from the White House. The vacancies were created by Judge James B. Zagel assuming senior status in 2016, Judge John W. Darrah assuming senior status and his subsequent untimely passing in 2017, the retirement of Judge Samuel Der-Yeghiayan in 2018, the elevation of Judge Amy St. Eve to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in 2018, and Judge Frederick J. Kapala assuming senior status in 2019.

Four new magistrate judges have joined the bench in 2019 – Magistrate Judges Sunil Harjani, Jeffrey Cummings, and Gabriel Fuentes in Chicago and Lisa Jensen in Rockford. The vacancies they filled were created by the untimely death of Magistrate Judge Danny Martin, the retirement of Magistrate Judge Michael T. Mason, and the Judicial Conference’s approval of the addition of two new magistrate judge positions, one in the Eastern and one in the Western Division.

In 2018, the court hosted the inaugural “State of Latinos in the Law Symposium.” Academic, legal, public policy experts, and three of the nation’s Hispanic chief judges addressed the root cause of challenges Latinx face in the legal profession, their educational journey, and their career cycles and explored strategies and recommendations to empower stakeholders to effectively address and resolve those underlying conditions.

In March 2019, the court community kicked off the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of Federal Courts in Illinois. Special events included the slicing of a bicentennial Eli’s cheesecake in the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse Lobby, a special program and reception at Harold Washington Library Center, a series of history lectures, bicentennial CLE offerings, a judicial oral history interview series, and the release of bicentennial documentary.

On International Women’s Day (March 8) 2019, Chief Judge Castillo announced his decision to step down early as Chief Judge, ushering the way for the first woman to serve as the Court’s Chief Judge, Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

“I’m delighted to make way for the Northern District of Illinois to be led by its first female Chief Judge, Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer. I am extremely pleased to be followed by someone who so deeply loves our court,” said Judge Castillo.

Judge Castillo’s last day as Chief Judge will be June 30, 2019. Judge Pallmeyer will assume her new role as Chief Judge on July 1, 2019.

##

