

Court Information Release



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

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the Northern District of Illinois
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U.S. District Court selects Karyn Bass Ehler to serve as U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of Illinois

CHICAGO, Ill.- Chief Judge Virginia M. Kendall announced today that the U.S. District Court has selected Karyn Bass Ehler to be the next United States Magistrate Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Ms. Bass Ehler has been designated to fill the upcoming vacancy created by the retirement of Magistrate Judge Jeffrey Gilbert on May 6, 2026.

“We are so pleased that Ms. Bass Ehler will be joining the hardworking and dedicated magistrate judge bench. Ms. Bass Ehler is a talented litigator with significant experience practicing before the Court. She has demonstrated a strong commitment to public service,” said Chief Judge Virginia M. Kendall.

Ms. Bass Ehler is currently the Assistant Chief Deputy Attorney General at the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, a position she has held since 2021. Prior to rejoining the Attorney General’s Office, Ms. Bass Ehler served as the General Counsel for the Illinois Department of Public Health from 2020 until 2021. She was the head of the Civil Rights practice group and Senior Counsel at Grant & Eisenhofer from 2019 to 2020. She also previously worked at the Illinois Attorney General’s Office for four years as the Chief of the Civil Rights Bureau. Before that, Ms. Bass Ehler was a partner and an associate at Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym from 2007 until 2015. In 2000, Ms. Bass Ehler earned her undergraduate degree from Northwestern University, and in 2005, she earned her law degree from DePaul University College of Law. She previously clerked for United States Circuit Court Judge William J. Bauer and United States District Court Judge Matthew F. Kennelly.

The magistrate judge position requires a minimum of five years as a member in good standing of the bar of the highest court of a state and at least five years of active practice of law. The term of office for a magistrate judge is eight years, with the opportunity of renewal of additional terms.

The selection of a magistrate judge is governed by statute and by regulations adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States. The Court had the assistance of a Merit Selection Panel, which screened and interviewed candidates and made a recommendation to the district judges of five applicants it found best qualified. The Panel, comprised of both attorneys and non-attorneys, was chaired by Ms. Eileen Letts. Members of the Panel included Mr. Theodore T. Chung, Mr. Ronald L. DeWald Jr., Hon. Grace G. Dickler (Ret.), Mr. Joseph M. Gagliardo, Ms. Verneé Green, Ms. Nathalina Hudson, Ms. Spiridoula (Litza) Mavrothalasitis, Ms. Amanda Gabriela Penabad, Mr. Nigel F. Telman, Ms. Kali Thomas, Mr. Jeffrey S. Torosian, Hon. Debra B. Walker, Hon. Edward Washington, II (Ret.), and Mr. Sheldon T. Zenner.

Magistrate judges perform a variety of duties for the court, including conducting preliminary proceedings in federal criminal cases and the trial and disposition of federal misdemeanor cases upon consent of the litigants. They conduct various pretrial matters and evidentiary proceedings upon referral from a district judge of the court and the trial and disposition of federal civil cases upon consent of the litigants.

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