

Law360

15 New Immigration Judges Sworn In To Serve Across US

By Cara Bayles

Law360, San Francisco (September 26, 2016, 10:43 PM EDT) -- The [Executive Office for Immigration Review](#) announced Monday it has sworn in 15 new immigration judges who will begin hearing cases this month in courts in California, Florida, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Nebraska, Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, Utah and Oregon.

The announcement from the EOIR, a wing of the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), comes less than two months after the DOJ announced it had [appointed five immigration court judges](#). Acting Chief Immigration Judge Michael McGoings said both rounds of appointments were meant to address the country's large backlog of immigration cases.

“With these appointments, EOIR now has 291 immigration judges, setting a new all-time high for our immigration judge corps and further strengthening our efforts to address the agency's pending caseload of more than 500,000,” McGoings said Monday in a statement.

The 15 judges were sworn in Friday at ceremony a ceremony at the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse, in Washington, D.C., according to the DOJ.

Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch appointed Judge Valerie A. Burch, Robin Kandell Paulino and Elizabeth L. Young to serve as an immigration judge in San Francisco. Ian Robert Simons will serve at the Immigration Court in Adelanto, California. Miami will get two new judges: Timothy M. Cole and G. William Riggs.

Richard Zanfardino will serve as an immigration judge in Portland, Oregon. Molly S. Frazer was appointed to the Florence Immigration Court in Arizona. Ivan Gardzelewski will serve as an immigration judge in Denver. Njeri B. Maldonado was appointed to the Stewart Immigration Court in Georgia. Nancy J. Paul was appointed to serve in Omaha, Nebraska. Jennifer I. Peyton will work in Chicago. Mario J. Sturla will work at Boston Immigration Court. P. Michael Truman will be an immigration judge in Salt Lake City. Walter Hammele Ruehle will work as an immigration judge in Buffalo, New York.

The new judges bring to the bench a variety of experiences: Some are educators with extensive military service, five are former assistant U.S. attorneys, and one worked as a staff attorney at the [American Civil Liberties Union](#).

The EOIR has been engaged a recent hiring push, saying several months ago that [nine immigration judges](#) had been sworn in for courts in Texas, New York and New Jersey.

Then in June, the agency announced it had sworn in [15 new immigration](#) judges in California, Texas, Pennsylvania and elsewhere, with four of those judges headed to Los Angeles.

Also this summer Lynch appointed [three new members](#) to the Board of Immigration Appeals. The appointments of Molly Kendall Clark, Ellen Liebowitz and Blair T. O'Connor represented the second time in 10 years that the number of board members had mushroomed.

The EOIR had called for an expansion of the board from 15 to 17 members in a rule the agency published in the Federal Register in June, saying that immigration courts overall were handling the largest caseload in U.S. history, estimated to be 418,861 at the end of fiscal year 2014. That number has since soared even higher, topping the half-million mark, according to McGoings' statement Tuesday.

--Additional reporting by Kevin Penton, Allissa Wickham and Daniel Siegal. Editing by Kat Laskowski.

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