



Public Information Office
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Executive Cathy Catterson to Retire

SAN FRANCISCO – Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit announced today the impending retirement of Cathy A. Catterson, Circuit and Court of Appeals Executive for the Ninth Circuit. Ms. Catterson plans to officially step down on February 28, 2017.

Ms. Catterson has more than 40 years of distinguished service to the Judicial Branch and is considered one of the deans of federal court management. Working alongside the last seven chief judges of the Ninth Circuit, she has played a significant role in the administration of justice, helping to conceive and implement many of the innovative policies and initiatives undertaken by the federal courts of the West.

“Cathy has been the center of gravity for our court for almost four decades, and there is not a judge on this court she has not lifted up in a time of need. Her extraordinary management skills and innovation have kept us not only afloat, but excelling, even in times of stress,” Chief Judge Thomas said. “She has our most profound thanks and appreciation for a lifetime of service and friendship to us all.”

Ms. Catterson, 64, served as Clerk of Court for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals from 1985 to 2007, when she was selected to fill the newly created position of Circuit and Court of Appeals Executive. In assuming that post, she gained additional duties as the administrative officer for the Office of the Circuit Executive, which provides staff support to the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, the governing body for federal courts in the western states.

Ms. Catterson currently directly manages or has oversight responsibility for nearly 300 employees working in Ninth Circuit courthouses in San Francisco and Pasadena, California, Portland, Oregon, and Seattle Washington. As the circuit executive, she also participates in judicial governance at the national level, including meetings held in conjunction with the biannual gatherings of the Judicial Conference of the United States.

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During Ms. Catterson's tenure as Clerk of Court, the caseload of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals more than doubled, rising from 5,411 new filings in 1985 to 12,685 new filings in 2007. She had central role in managing the explosive growth, which necessitated additional staff, the introduction of computers to communicate and automate document processing, and the institution of new and innovative case management strategies.

Ms. Catterson managed the introduction of cameras into Ninth Circuit courtrooms. What began in 1991 as a small pilot program allowing the media to video record a few cases a year has evolved into today's highly-advanced, court-operated system that provides live video streaming of all oral arguments over the Internet. She also coordinated staff management of the many high-profile cases to have been heard by the court.

Ms. Catterson's biggest managerial test came in 1989 when heavy damage from the Loma Prieta Earthquake forced the court to evacuate its San Francisco headquarters. Using temporary venues, the court never missed a session during the initial disruption and later relocated to a downtown office complex, where court business was conducted until the courthouse reopened in 1997.

Ms. Catterson joined the staff of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1979 as a senior case expeditor. Prior to coming to the court, she had worked in Washington, D.C., as a law clerk to U.S. District Court Judge Edward J. Devitt of Minnesota, and as a staff assistant to U.S. Senator Jacob K. Javits of New York. It was her work with Judge Devitt, then chair of a U.S. Judicial Conference committee developing admission standards for attorneys seeking to practice in federal courts, that led Ms. Catterson to seek employment with the Ninth Circuit.

"It has been an honor and privilege to work with so many incredibly talented and hard working judges, particularly all of my chiefs. And I was fortunate to have had an equally amazing and dedicated staff," Ms. Catterson said. "It is going to be tough to leave the building. But it's the right decision and as right a time as it can be."

A native of Queens, New York, Ms. Catterson received her undergraduate degree in 1974 from Catholic University of America, and her J.D. in 1978 from George Mason University Law School. She is admitted to practice before the U.S. Courts of Appeal for the Fourth and Ninth Circuits, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, and the Supreme Court of Virginia.

The Ninth Circuit encompasses Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. It includes the court of appeals and the federal trial and bankruptcy courts in 15 judicial districts within the circuit.