



NEWS RELEASE

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Heather Williams Reappointed Federal Public Defender for Eastern California

SAN FRANCISCO — Judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit have approved the reappointment of Federal Public Defender Heather Williams of the Eastern District of California.

Chief Judge Lawrence J. O’Neill of the Eastern District administered the oath of office to Ms. Williams on February 28, 2017. Her reappointment to a second four-year term is effective May 6, 2017.

Ms. Williams has been the federal public defender for the Eastern District since 2013. She previously had been an assistant federal public defender in District of Arizona for almost 20 years.

Ms. Williams began her career in public service in 1988 as an assistant public defender for Pima County Office of the Public Defender in Tucson, Arizona, where she handled felony cases including death penalty homicides, drugs, sex crimes, and child abuse. Prior to that, she worked as an associate attorney in San Diego, California, from 1986 to 1988.

A Tucson native, Ms. Williams received her bachelor’s degree, summa cum laude, from Pittsburgh State University in 1982 and her J.D. from the University of San Diego Law School in 1985.

The Office of the Federal Defender for the Eastern District of California, which opened 1,966 new cases in fiscal year 2016, is headquartered in Sacramento and maintains a fully-staffed branch office in Fresno.

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The Office of the Federal Public Defender was created by Congress to fulfill the constitutional requirement that indigents charged with crimes in the federal justice system be provided with professional legal representation at no cost. Congress funds the Offices of the Federal Public Defender through the Defender Services Division of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

By statute, judges of the courts of appeals select and appoint the federal public defender for a renewable term of four years. The court makes its initial appointment after a nationwide recruitment and the use of a local screening committee pursuant to Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines. A federal public defender may be reappointed if the court concludes that he or she is performing in a highly satisfactory manner based upon a broad survey and performance evaluation process.

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