



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Heather E. Williams Reappointed Federal Public Defender for Eastern District of California**

SAN FRANCISCO — The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has announced the reappointment of Federal Public Defender Heather E. Williams for the Eastern District of California to a third four-year term. First appointed to lead the office in 2013, her reappointment is effective May 6, 2021.

“Heather Williams is an outstanding leader of a highly regarded office that vigorously advocates for those in need,” said Circuit Judge Kim McLane Wardlaw, who chairs the Ninth Circuit’s Standing Committee on Federal Public Defenders. “We are very fortunate that she has accepted a third term of office.”

Williams is supported by 84 attorneys and support staff working in offices in Fresno and Sacramento. In addition to criminal defense and appeals, the office represents capital prisoners in habeas corpus proceedings and reported 1,285 new criminal cases opened in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020.

Prior to becoming FPD in 2013, Williams served as an assistant federal public defender in the District of Arizona for nearly 20 years. She began her career in public service in 1988 as an assistant public defender with the Pima County Public Defender’s Office 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.

Williams is a member of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts’ Defender Services Peer Advisory Group, which advises the federal judiciary on policies affecting the delivery of services under the Criminal Justice Act. She also serves on the Defender Services Automation Working Group, which develops long-range plans to meet automation and technology needs necessary to effective legal representation of financially eligible defendants.

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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 Public Defender was created by Congress to fulfill the constitutional requirement that financially eligible individuals charged with crimes in the federal justice system be provided with professional legal representation at no cost. By statute, judges of the courts of appeals select and appoint the federal public defender for a renewable four-year term. In the Ninth Circuit, FPD applicants are evaluated by both a local screening committee and the court's Standing Committee on Federal Public Defenders, applying Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines. Reappointment to additional terms is based upon demonstration of highly satisfactory performance as determined by a broad survey and performance evaluation.

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