



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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## NEWS RELEASE

December 20, 2021

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## Senate Confirms Five New Judges for the U.S. District Courts in California and Washington

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Senate voted to confirm five new district judges for the U.S. district courts in a marathon session that saw the last judge confirmed after midnight on Dec. 18, 2021, as the Senate closed out its session.

- Magistrate Judge Linda Lopez to serve as a U.S. district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. Senate voted on December 17, 48-27 with 27 senators not voting.
- Judge Jinsook Ohta to serve as a U.S. district judge for the Southern District of California. Senate voted on December 17, 47-27 with 29 senators not voting.
- Judge Maame Ewusi-Mensah Frimpong to serve as a U.S. district judge for the Central District of California. Senate voted on December 17, 47-24 with 29 senators not voting.
- Magistrate Judge Jennifer L. Thurston to serve as a U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of California. Senate voted on December 17, 46-24 with 30 senators not voting.
- Magistrate Judge Mary Katherine Dimke to serve as a U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Washington. Senate voted on December 18, 47-23 with 30 senators not voting.

**Judge Lopez** was nominated for the judgeship on Sept. 30, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Nov. 3, 2021. Her nomination was reported to the Senate Floor on Dec. 2, 2021. Following her oath, she will fill a judgeship vacant since Dec. 31, 2017, when District Judge Roger Benitez assumed senior status. Judge Lopez will maintain chambers in San Diego.

Judge Lopez has served as a magistrate judge for the Southern District of California since 2018. Previously, she was a senior trial attorney for the Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc., from 2007 until her appointment to the bench. From 2003 to 2007, she was a sole practitioner, running a criminal defense firm and practicing in both state and federal court in Miami, where she

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defended both retained defendants and financially eligible defendants appointed to her as part of the Criminal Justice Act Panel. From 1999 to 2003, she was an attorney with a small firm in Miami where she had worked for nine years in various legal assistant positions while going to college.

Judge Lopez received her Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, from Florida International University in 1996 and her Juris Doctor, magna cum laude and Order of the Coif, in 1999 from the University of Miami School of Law, where she served as an editor for the University of Miami Law Review.

In 2018, Judge Lopez was recognized with a Service Award for her dedicated leadership as head of the San Diego Chapter of the Federal Bar Association's Community Outreach Committee from 2018 to 2019. In addition to her work with the Community Outreach Committee, Judge Lopez has volunteered extensively with the San Diego Chapter of the FBA throughout her career, including as a board member; as a liaison for the Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc., and as head of the fundraising committee. Judge Lopez also has been a Master of the Welsh Inn of Court for many years and is currently a Master of the Enright Inn of Court.

Born in Miami, Florida, and the daughter of Cuban immigrants, Judge Lopez has utilized her Spanish-speaking ability to represent many undocumented immigrants and monolingual Spanish speakers. As a child of immigrants, Judge Lopez's has taken great pleasure fulfilling her responsibilities in presiding over three naturalization ceremonies in San Diego, where she will maintain chambers.

**Judge Ohta** was nominated for the judgeship on Sept. 30, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Nov. 3, 2021. Her nomination was reported to the Senate Floor on Dec. 2, 2021. Following her oath, Judge Ohta will become the first Korean American judge in the district and will fill a judgeship vacant since Jan. 23, 2019, when District Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz assumed senior status. Judge Ohta will maintain chambers in San Diego.

Judge Ohta has served as a judge on the Superior Court of California, San Diego County, since 2020. Before joining the bench, she worked at the California Attorney General's Office, where she served as supervising deputy attorney general and deputy attorney general, from 2019 to

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2020 and from 2011 to 2019, respectively. She engaged in private practice as an associate with the law firm of Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton, LLP, in San Diego, from 2003 to 2006, and as an associate at O'Melveny & Myers LLP in Los Angeles and San Francisco from 2002 to 2003.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Judge Ohta received her Bachelor of Arts from Yale University in 1998 and her Juris Doctor from New York University School of Law in 2001. Following law school, she clerked for District Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California from 2001 to 2002 and from 2007 to 2008. She was a visiting assistant professor of law at Thomas Jefferson School of Law from 2006 to 2007.

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California had 6,122 new case filings in fiscal year 2021 ending September 30. The court is authorized 13 permanent judgeships, five of which are currently vacant.

**Judge Frimpong** was nominated for the judgeship on Sept. 20, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Oct. 20, 2021. Her nomination was reported to the Senate Floor on Dec. 2, 2021. Following her oath, Judge Frimpong will fill a judgeship vacant since Nov. 23, 2016, when District Judge Christina A. Snyder assumed senior status. Judge Frimpong will maintain chambers in Los Angeles.

Judge Frimpong has served as a judge on the Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County, since 2016. Before joining the bench, she worked for Millennium Challenge Corporation in Washington, D.C., where she held the positions of corporate secretary, general counsel and vice president from 2015 to 2016. Previously, she worked for the U.S. Department of Justice in D.C., where she was counselor to the attorney general, 2014-2015; principal deputy associate attorney general, 2014; deputy assistant attorney general, Consumer Protection, 2012-2014; acting deputy assistant attorney general, Consumer Protection, 2011-2012; acting deputy assistant attorney general, Torts, 2012; counsel to the assistant attorney general, Civil Division, 2009-2011; and a trial attorney, National Courts Section, 2007-2009. During her time at the DOJ, she received the John Marshall Award for Outstanding Legal Achievement in 2010; the Civil Division Special Commendation Award in 2008; the Civil Division Performance Award in 2008; and the Time-Off Incentive Awards, 2007-2008. Judge Frimpong was an associate at the law firm of Morrison

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& Foerster, LLP, in San Francisco, from 2002 to 2007.

Born in Los Angeles, California, Judge Frimpong received her Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, from Harvard College in 1997 and her Juris Doctor from Yale Law School in 2001. Following law school, she clerked for Circuit Judge Stephen Reinhardt of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 2001 to 2002.

The U.S. District Court for the Central District of California had 15,714 new case filings in fiscal year 2021 ending September 30. The court is authorized 28 permanent judgeships, five of which are currently vacant and one that is a future vacancy.

**Judge Thurston** was nominated for the judgeship on Sept. 20, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Oct. 20, 2021. Her nomination was reported to the Senate Floor on Dec. 2, 2021. Upon taking her oath, Judge Thurston will fill a judgeship vacant since Feb. 2, 2020, when District Judge Lawrence J. O'Neill took senior status. Judge Thurston will maintain chambers in Fresno.

Judge Thurston has served as a magistrate judge for the Eastern District of California since 2009 and has been the chief U.S. magistrate judge for that district since October 2020. From 1997 to 2009, she was deputy county counsel in Kern County, California, and a small claims advisor for that county from 1995 to 1997. In 1997, Judge Thurston served as law clerk to the Kern County district attorney.

Judge Thurston received a Bachelor of Science from California State University, Bakersfield, in 1989; a Master of Laws from Duke University in 2018; and a Juris Doctor from the California Pacific School of Law in 1997.

In addition to her courtroom duties, Judge Thurston oversees the Eastern District of California's reentry court program in Bakersfield, working with a team from the U.S. Probation Office, the Federal Public Defender's Office, the United States Attorney's Office, and a graduate mentor to provide participants with needed services, support, and guidance along with heightened supervision in an effort to prevent recidivism.

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Judge Thurston serves as a board member and officer of the Kern County Bar Association, regularly judges local high school mock trial and academic decathlon competitions, and coaches a high school mock trial team. From 2007 to 2009, she also acted as a judge pro tem for the Kern County Superior Court. Since approximately 2015, she has volunteered as an application evaluator for the Kern County Foundation, which awards scholarships to college-bound high school students. In 2019, she helped launch “Operation Protect and Defend,” a civics program designed to educate Kern County high school students about the U.S. system of government.

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California had 4,494 new case filings in fiscal year 2021 ending September 30. The court is authorized six permanent judgeships, one of which is currently vacant and another that is a future vacancy.

**Judge Dimke** was nominated for the judgeship on Aug. 5, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Oct. 20, 2021. Her nomination was reported to the Senate Floor on Dec. 2, 2021. Following her oath, she will fill a judgeship vacant since Oct. 1, 2021, when District Judge Rosanna Malouf Peterson assumed senior status. Judge Dimke will maintain chambers in Spokane.

Judge Dimke has served as a magistrate judge for the Eastern District of Washington since 2016. From 2012 to 2016, she was an assistant district attorney in the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of Washington. From 2008 to 2012, she was an assistant district attorney in the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Western District of Washington. Judge Dimke served as a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division, Fraud Section, for the District of Columbia, from 2004 to 2007.

Judge Dimke earned her Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, from Pepperdine University in 1999 and her Juris Doctor, Order of the Coif, from Vanderbilt University School of Law in 2002. Following law school, she clerked for District Judge Alan B. Johnson of the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming from 2002 to 2003 and for Circuit Judge Richard C. Tallman of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 2003 to 2004.

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Judge Dimke has earned a number of certificates of appreciation for her efforts in various offices and cases, including a 2016 certificate of appreciation for HSI Investigations from the U.S.

Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and a 2007 Assistant Attorney General's Award for safeguarding and maintenance of confidence in the American marketplace from the U.S. DOJ.

Judge Dimke participates in the court's Judicial Teachers' Institute and regularly volunteers to judge the court's civics competitions for students. She volunteers to conduct naturalization ceremonies each year and is organizing the court's 2021 Power Act webinar to encourage pro bono work to benefit individuals affected by domestic violence in tribal communities. Judge Dimke has volunteered at the Tri-Cities Youth and Justice Forum since 2012 and has been on the Planning Committee since 2015. She regularly participates in events across the district ranging from elementary through law school, to teach civics education and participate in career fairs.

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington had 1,307 new case filings in fiscal year 2021 ending September 30. The court is authorized four permanent judgeships, all of which are filled.

Appointed under Article III of the U.S. Constitution, federal district court judges are nominated by the president, confirmed by the Senate and serve lifetime appointments upon good behavior.

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