



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Confirms Judge Lucy Haeran Koh to Seat on U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Senate voted Monday (Dec. 13) to confirm President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.’s, nomination of U.S. District Judge Lucy Haeran Koh to serve as a U.S. circuit judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Upon taking her oath, Judge Koh will become the first Korean American woman and only the third woman of Asian American descent appointed to a federal appellate court. Confirmation came by a vote of 50-45.

Judge Koh was nominated for the judgeship on Sept. 20, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Oct. 6, 2021. Following her oath, Judge Koh will fill a judgeship created when Circuit Judge Richard A. Paez assumed senior status on Dec. 13, 2021.

Judge Koh has served as a district judge for the Northern District of California since 2010, when she became the first Asian American U.S. district judge appointed in that district and the first U.S. district judge of Korean descent appointed in the U.S. Prior to the federal bench, Judge Koh served as a judge on the California Superior Court, Santa Clara County since 2008, when she was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Before joining the bench, Judge Koh engaged in private practice as a partner at the law firm of McDermott, Will and Emery in Palo Alto, California, from 2002 to 2008, and as a senior associate at Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati in Palo Alto from 2000 to 2002.

Earlier in her career, Judge Koh was an assistant U.S. attorney in the Criminal Division, Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California, in Los Angeles from 1997 to 2000. She worked from 1994 to 1997 for the U.S. Department of Justice, where she served as special assistant to the U.S. deputy attorney general, from 1996 to 1997, and as special counsel in the Office of Legislative Affairs from 1994 to 1996. From 1993 to 1994, she was a Women’s Law and Public Policy Fellow for the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

Judge Koh received her Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, from Harvard University in 1990 and her Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School in 1993.

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Judge Koh is a member of the American Law Institute and serves as adviser on the Institute's Data Economy Project. As a member of the American Bar Association Business Law Section, she serves as vice chair of the Advisors Committee and as co-director of programs for the Cyberspace Law Committee. She is a lifetime member of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Silicon Valley, where she has held many leadership positions, and a sustaining member of the Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area.

Recognized for her leadership in her community and the impact she has made on intellectual property law and beyond, Judge Koh received several awards including the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association's Trailblazer Award and Women's Leadership Award; the American Bar Association Intellectual Property Law Section's Mark T. Banner Award; and the California State Bar Intellectual Property Law Section's Judiciary Award. In 2015, Judge Koh was recognized as the district judge in the U.S. appointed in the last five years whose rulings are cited the most by other federal judges.

The Ninth Circuit encompasses Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington state, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. It includes the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the federal trial and bankruptcy courts in the 15 judicial districts within the circuit. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit had 10,455 new filings in calendar year 2020 ending December 31. All 29 authorized judgeships are currently filled. There are three future vacancies with a date to be determined.

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

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