



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Colin Fieman Appointed as New Federal Public Defender for Western District of Washington**

SAN FRANCISCO — Judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit have selected Colin Fieman as the next federal public defender for the Western District of Washington. He succeeds Michael Filipovic, who retired on Feb. 28, 2022, after more than 31 years of service in the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington, the last eight as its leader. Fieman begins his four-year term today (May 5).

“Colin Fieman has more than 23 years of experience serving indigent defendants and has a stellar reputation within the legal community,” said Circuit Judge Kim McLane Wardlaw, who chairs the Ninth Circuit’s Standing Committee on Federal Public Defenders. “We are confident he will continue the office’s tradition of zealous and compassionate advocacy established by his predecessors.”

Fieman said, “I am honored by this appointment and thoroughly committed to improving the lives of our clients. I look forward to working with the Court, the U.S. Attorney’s Office and other stakeholders to advance our criminal justice system and enhance community safety through alternatives to incarceration.”

Fieman joined the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington as an assistant federal public defender in 2002 in its Tacoma office and was promoted to the position of senior litigator in 2017. He represents clients charged with a broad range of federal offenses, serves as faculty for the National Criminal Defense College, and regularly teaches on criminal law issues at other training seminars.

Fieman began his legal career in 1990 as a prosecutor with the New York County District Attorney’s Office, focused on white collar fraud and official corruption cases, and later worked for the New York City Commission to Combat Police Corruption. From 1997 to 2000, he served as a staff attorney for the University of Georgia Law School’s Legal Aid and

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Defender Clinic, where he represented clients in over 200 felony cases per year and supervised and trained law students. Thereafter, he served for two years as director of the public defender's office in Yap, one of four states that comprise the Federated States of Micronesia.

Born in New York City, Fieman received his Bachelor of Arts degrees, Phi Beta Kappa, in philosophy and sociology from Haverford College in 1986 and his Juris Doctor in 1990 from Columbia Law School, where he was director of the Columbia Appellate Moot Court Program, from 1989 to 1990, and submissions editor of the Columbia Human Rights Law Review.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington, headquartered in Seattle, has approximately 55 employees, which include attorneys, paralegals, investigators, and administrative personnel. The office opened 1,130 cases and closed 1,238 cases in fiscal year 2021 ending September 30.

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, 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 on a comprehensive evaluation of the federal public defender's performance, including an invitation for public comment.

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