Ruth Bermudez Montenegro to Serve as U.S. District Judge for Southern District of California

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Senate today voted 55-41 to confirm President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.’s, nomination of U.S. Magistrate Judge Ruth Bermudez Montenegro to serve as a U.S. district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.

“The appointment of Judge Montenegro to our district bench is very welcome news. Judge Montenegro has served the Southern District of California as a magistrate judge in Imperial County with great distinction, and we are most delighted that she will be joining our number as a district judge in San Diego,” said Chief Judge Dana M. Sabraw of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. “She is a terrific judge and an exceptional person. Her collegiality, warm and engaging personality, and wonderful sense of humor will make her a great and much needed addition to our very busy court, which last year had the fourth most criminal case filings in the nation,” Chief Judge Sabraw concluded.

Judge Montenegro was first nominated for the judgeship on Nov. 3, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Dec. 15, 2021. The Senate did not act on her nomination on the first session of the 117th Congress. President Biden nominated her again on Jan. 3, 2022, and the Senate Judiciary Committee reported her nomination to the Senate Floor on Jan. 20, 2022. Upon taking her oath, Judge Montenegro will fill a judgeship vacant since Feb. 6, 2018, when District Judge John A. Houston assumed senior status. Judge Montenegro will maintain chambers in San Diego.

Judge Montenegro has served as the sole U.S. magistrate judge for the Southern District of California in Imperial County since 2018. Before joining the federal bench, she served as judge on the Superior Court of California, Imperial County, where she was the first Latina judge in the history of the county. Previously, she was a family support commissioner for the Imperial County Superior Court, where she was the first female to serve in that capacity. Judge Montenegro has served as the sole U.S. magistrate judge for the Southern District of California in Imperial County since 2018. Before joining the federal bench, she served as judge on the Superior Court of California, Imperial County, where she was the first Latina judge in the history of the county. Previously, she was a family support commissioner for the Imperial County Superior Court, where she was the first female to serve in that capacity. Judge Montenegro has served as the sole U.S. magistrate judge for the Southern District of California in Imperial County since 2018. Before joining the federal bench, she served as judge on the Superior Court of California, Imperial County, where she was the first Latina judge in the history of the county. Previously, she was a family support commissioner for the Imperial County Superior Court, where she was the first female to serve in that capacity. Judge Montenegro has served as the sole U.S. magistrate judge for the Southern District of California in Imperial County since 2018. Before joining the federal bench, she served as judge on the Superior Court of California, Imperial County, where she was the first Latina judge in the history of the county. Previously, she was a family support commissioner for the Imperial County Superior Court, where she was the first female to serve in that capacity. Judge Montenegro has served as the sole U.S. magistrate judge for the Southern District of California in Imperial County since 2018. Before joining the federal bench, she served as judge on the Superior Court of California, Imperial County, where she was the first Latina judge in the history of the county. Previously, she was a family support commissioner for the Imperial County Superior Court, where she was the first female to serve in that capacity. Judge Montenegro has served as the sole U.S. magistrate judge for the Southern District of California in Imperial County since 2018. Before joining the federal bench, she served as judge on the Superior Court of California, Imperial County, where she was the first Latina judge in the history of the county. Previously, she was a family support commissioner for the Imperial County Superior Court, where she was the first female to serve in that capacity.
Montenegro was the assistant county counsel for the Office of County Counsel, Imperial County, from 2011 to 2012. She worked for the El Centro Elementary School District as assistant superintendent for human resources/administrative services and counsel from 2002 to 2011. She was director of human resources and counsel for the Imperial Community College District from 2000 to 2002. She served as deputy county counsel IV for the Office of County Counsel, Imperial County, in 2000. She was also an attorney at Horton, Knox, Carter & Foote, LLP from 1993 to 2000.

Judge Montenegro is a member of the California Civic Learning Partnership Committee and a former board member of the California Bar Foundation.

Born in Brawley, California, Judge Montenegro received her Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude, from Clarion University of Pennsylvania in 1989 and her Juris Doctor in 1992 from the University of California at Los Angeles, School of Law, where she was elected UCLA Graduate Student Association President.

Judge Montenegro has been widely recognized for her service to the community. Most recently, Judge Montenegro received a 40th Senate District “Women of the Year” Award in 2020 and Clarion University of Pennsylvania’s “Distinguished Alumni” Award in 2020.

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California had 5,842 new case filings in calendar year 2021. The court is authorized 13 judgeships, four of which are currently vacant.

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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