



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Confirms Sunshine Suzanne Sykes for Federal Judgeship in Central District of California

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Senate today voted 51-45 to confirm President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.’s, nomination of Superior Court Judge Sunshine Suzanne Sykes to serve as a U.S. district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. She is a member of the Navajo Nation, the first Native American Article III judge in California, the first Article III judge from the Navajo Nation, and the fifth Native American Article III judge actively serving in the U.S.

Judge Sykes was nominated for the judgeship on Dec. 15, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Feb. 1, 2022. Her nomination was reported to the Senate floor on March 10, 2022. Following her oath, she will fill a judgeship vacant since March 3, 2020, when District Judge James V. Selna assumed senior status. Judge Sykes will maintain chambers in Riverside.

Judge Sykes has served as a Riverside Superior Court judge since 2013. Before her appointment to the bench, she worked in the Office of County Counsel, Riverside County, where she served as deputy county counsel from 2005-2013. From 2003-2005, she was a contract attorney for the Juvenile Defense Panel in Murrieta, California. In 1998 and from 2000-2003, Judge Sykes served at California Indian Legal Services, first as an administrative assistant (1998), law clerk (2000), then as a staff attorney (2001-2003). Judge Sykes was a clinical program advocate for the East Palo Alto Community Law Project from 1999-2000. In 1999 she was law clerk for DNA Legal Services on the Navajo reservation.

Born in Tuba City, Arizona, Judge Sykes received her Juris Doctor from Stanford Law School in 2001 and her Bachelor of Arts, with honors, from Stanford University in 1997.

The U.S. District Court for the Central District of California had 14,919 new case filings in calendar year 2021. The court is authorized 28 judgeships and currently has four vacancies.

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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