



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Confirms Kenly Kiya Kato for Federal Judgeship in Central District of California

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Senate today voted 51-46 to confirm U.S. Magistrate Judge Kenly Kiya Kato of the Central District of California to serve as a U.S. district judge for that court. Judge Kato was nominated for the judgeship by President Biden on Dec. 15, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Feb. 1, 2022. Following her oath, she will fill a judgeship vacant since the death of District Judge Beverly Reid O’Connell on Oct. 8, 2017. Judge Kato will maintain chambers in Riverside in the court’s Eastern Division.

“We are delighted that Judge Kato will now be a district judge of this Court,” said Chief Judge Philip S. Gutierrez of the Central District of California. “Judge Kato has been an exceptional magistrate judge for many years, approaching each case with intelligence, integrity, and compassion. She will undoubtedly bring the same skills and qualities to the bench as a district judge, and we are lucky to continue to have her as a colleague.”

Judge Kato has been a magistrate judge since 2014 in the Central District of California, where she handled a wide variety of civil and criminal cases. In addition to her caseload, Judge Kato is a member of the district’s two collaborative courts, the Conviction and Sentence Alternatives Program and Substance Abuse Treatment and Reentry Program, which provide a pathway for offenders to attain rehabilitation and become contributing members of the community.

Judge Kato received her Bachelor of Arts degree, summa cum laude, from UCLA in 1993, and her Juris Doctor degree, cum laude, from Harvard Law School in 1996. Following law school, Judge Kato clerked for the late Honorable Robert M. Takasugi of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

From 1997 to 2003, Judge Kato served in the Federal Public Defender’s Office for the Central District of California. As a deputy federal public defender, she represented hundreds of clients charged with a broad range of federal offenses before the district court and, occasionally, before

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the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Judge Kato entered private practice in 2004, and until her appointment as a magistrate judge in 2014, her practice focused primarily on federal criminal defense work. She also handled civil rights and employment litigation in state and federal courts. In addition, Judge Kato was a member of the district's Criminal Justice Act panel and served on the Attorney Discipline Committee and Merit Selection Panel.

The U.S. District Court for the Central District of California had 14,572 new case filings in calendar year 2022. The court is authorized 28 judgeships and currently has two 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.