



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Confirms Justice Adrienne C. Nelson for Federal Judgeship in the District of Oregon

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Senate today voted 52-46 to confirm President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.’s, nomination of Justice Adrienne C. Nelson, Oregon Supreme Court, to serve as a U.S. district judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon. Upon taking her oath on February 24, Justice Nelson will become the first African American woman appointed to the district court.

“Justice Nelson’s colleagues in the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon could not be more pleased to welcome her to the federal court family. Justice Nelson’s exemplary character, deep expertise, and extraordinary example of service reflect the very best values of the judiciary,” said Chief District Judge Marco A. Hernández of the District of Oregon. “We look forward to welcoming Justice Nelson and serving alongside her. This is a tremendous day for Oregon,” he noted.

Justice Nelson was nominated for the judgeship on July 14, 2022, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Oct. 12, 2022. Her nomination was pending and thus was returned to the president when the Second Session of the 117th Congress adjourned on Jan. 3, 2023. She was renominated on January 3, and her nomination was reported to the Senate floor on February 2. She will fill a judgeship vacant since Dec. 27, 2021, when District Judge Michael W. Mosman assumed senior status. Justice Nelson will maintain chambers in Portland.

Justice Nelson is the first African American justice appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court, where she has served since 2018. From 2006 to 2018, she served as a circuit court judge on the Multnomah County Circuit Court in Portland. Prior to taking the bench, she worked as a coordinator and senior attorney for Portland State University from 2004 to 2006 and was an adjunct professor at Lewis & Clark Law School from 2002 to 2005.

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Justice Nelson was an associate attorney, from 1999 to 2004, with Bennett, Hartman, Morris & Kaplan, LLP, where she represented individuals, private businesses and labor unions, and gained experience in civil litigation, personnel disputes, employment law matters, commercial cases, family law, arbitrations and mediations. From 1996 to 1999, she was a public defender with Multnomah Defenders, Inc., where she represented indigent defendants who were charged with state crimes in all manner of criminal cases.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Justice Nelson received her Juris Doctor from the University of Texas School of Law at Austin in 1993 and her Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude, from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in 1989.

Justice Nelson is on the boards of trustees for the Oregon Historical Society and Reed College and the board of directors for Literary Arts. She has won a number of awards, including the Woman of Achievement Award, Oregon Commission on Women, in 2020; the Equity Achievement Award, presented by the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts in 2021; and is a Spirit of Excellence Award Honoree, American Bar Association Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession in 2022. The Adrienne C. Nelson High School opened in the North Clackamas School District in 2021.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon had 2,399 new case filings in calendar year 2022. The court is authorized six judgeships.

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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