



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Senate Confirms Judge Rebecca L. Pennell for Federal Judgeship in Eastern District of Washington**

SAN FRANCISCO – The U.S. Senate today voted 50-48 to confirm President Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s nomination of Judge Rebecca L. Pennell, Washington Court of Appeals Division III, to serve as a U.S. district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington.

“My colleagues and I are pleased to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Judge Pennell on her confirmation. This significant achievement marks an important milestone in both her distinguished legal career and the continued strength of our federal judiciary. Judge Pennell brings a wealth of experience, legal acumen, and a commitment to justice that will undoubtedly contribute to the integrity and excellence of our court,” said Chief U.S. District Judge Stanley A. Bastian, Eastern District of Washington.

Judge Pennell was nominated for the judgeship on March 21, 2024, and had her nomination hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on April 17, 2024. Her nomination was reported to the Senate floor on May 9, 2024. Upon taking her oath, Judge Pennell will fill a judgeship vacant since Sept. 12, 2022, when District Judge Salvador Mendoza Jr. was elevated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Judge Pennell will maintain chambers in Spokane.

Judge Pennell was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to the Washington State Court of Appeals Division III in Spokane, Washington, and was elected in 2016 and re-elected in 2020. Before her appointment to the bench, she worked from 2000 to 2016 for the Federal Defenders of Eastern Washington and Idaho in Yakima, Washington, where she served as a trial and appellate attorney. Judge Pennell was a fellowship attorney at TeamChild in Yakima from 1999 to 2000.

Born in Boulder, Colorado, Judge Pennell received her Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, from the University of Washington in 1993 and her Juris Doctor in 1996, with distinction and Order of the Coif, from Stanford Law School, where she was a Public Service Fellow in 1996 and was a research assistant from 1995 to 1996. She clerked for the Honorable Robert H. Whaley of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington from 1997 to 1999.

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Judge Pennell has been a member of the Washington State Court of Appeals Rules Committee since 2020 and a member of the Yakima County Bar Association since 2014. She was a member of the Washington State Board for Judicial Administration from 2020 to 2024 and was chair of the board's Court Education Committee from 2023 to 2024.

Judge Pennell was chair of the Washington Court of Appeals Task Force on Criminal Case Processing, from 2022 to 2023; a member of the National Association of Women Judges in 2016; a member of the National Association of Federal Defenders, from 2010 to 2016; and a member of the Federal Bar Association, Eastern District of Washington, from 2010 to 2015, serving as secretary in 2011 and trustee from 2010 to 2011.

Judge Pennell was a member of the Ninth Circuit Lawyer Representatives Coordinating Committee from 2012 to 2015, serving as vice chair from 2012 to 2014 then as chair from 2014 to 2015. She served on the Ninth Circuit's Conference Executive Committee and was program chair of the 2015 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference held in Spokane.

Judge Pennell, along with her judicial colleagues, received the 2023 Judge William Nevins Award from the Washington Judges Foundation for their outstanding contribution to youth education and/or the public understanding of the law and the role of the judiciary in American society.

The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington had 1,070 new case filings in fiscal year 2024. The court is authorized four 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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