



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Salina M. Kanai Reappointed as Federal Public Defender for District of Hawai'i**

**SAN FRANCISCO** — Judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit have approved the reappointment of Federal Public Defender Salina M. Kanai, District of Hawai'i, to a second four-year term. First appointed to lead the office in 2021, her reappointment is effective Feb. 16, 2025.

“Salina Kanai has done a terrific job leading the District of Hawai'i Federal Public Defender Office,” said Circuit Judge Kim McLane Wardlaw, who chairs the Ninth Circuit's Standing Committee on Federal Public Defenders. “In her first term, she deftly navigated pandemic-related challenges while ensuring the office continued to provide the highest level of representation for its clients. The court fully supports her reappointment to another four-year term.”

“I am honored to have been reappointed by the Ninth Circuit as the Federal Public Defender for the District of Hawai'i. I look forward to continuing this important work alongside my incredible team of attorneys, investigators, and dedicated professionals, all of whom are committed to providing our indigent clients with high-quality and zealous advocacy,” said Kanai.

Kanai's 22-year legal career has been devoted to indigent criminal defense, starting as a criminal appellate attorney at the Office of the Appellate Defender in New York City. She then served for five years as a deputy public defender in the State of Hawai'i's Office of the Public Defender and eight years as an assistant federal defender with the FPD Office in Hawai'i. Before rejoining the FPD Office, she was in private practice, specializing in state and federal criminal defense and serving as a part-time family court judge for the Hawai'i State Judiciary. Kanai received her B.A. from New York University and her J.D. from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Hawai'i, headquartered in Honolulu, has approximately 17 employees, which include attorneys, paralegals, investigators and administrative personnel. The FPD Office for the District of Hawai'i opened 451 cases and closed 451 cases in fiscal year 2024 ending September 30.

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The Office of the Federal Public Defender was created by Congress to fulfill the constitutional requirement that financially eligible individuals charged with crimes in the federal justice system be provided with professional legal representation at no cost. By statute, judges of the courts of appeals select and appoint the federal public defender for a renewable four-year term. In the 9th Circuit, applicants are evaluated by both a local screening committee and the court's Standing Committee on Federal Public Defenders, applying Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines. Reappointment to additional terms is based on a comprehensive evaluation of the federal public defender's performance, including an invitation for public comment.

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