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United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Alaskans Gather for Investiture of Ninth Circuit Judge Morgan Christen

SAN FRANCISCO – The Honorable Morgan B. Christen, the first woman from Alaska to sit as a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, was formally invested into her office at a ceremony held Wednesday, May 30, in Anchorage, Alaska.

U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich of Alaska along with Chief Justice Walter L. Carpeneti of the Alaska Supreme Court were among the guest speakers for the investiture, which drew a large crowd of well-wishers to the Dena 'Ina Civic & Convention Center in downtown Anchorage. Among the estimated 600 attendees were federal and state judges, many members of the Alaska bar, elected officials and community leaders.

Judge Christen received the oath of office from Ninth Circuit Senior Judge Andrew J. Kleinfeld of Fairbanks, Alaska. Judge Kleinfeld assumed senior status in 2010, creating the vacancy eventually filled by Judge Christen. She was helped into her black robes of office by her husband, James Torgerson, and her daughter, Erin Christen, both of whom also made remarks. Also participating in the program was Eleanor Andrews, a close friend of Judge Christen.

The Hon. Mary M. Schroeder, a chief judge *emeritus* of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, read aloud the judicial commission, which was officially conferred on Judge Christen soon after her confirmation by the Senate on December 15, 2011. She has been hearing appeals since April.

Ninth Circuit Judge Sidney R. Thomas presided over the ceremony and several other Ninth Circuit judges were on hand to formally welcome Judge Christen to the court.

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The program opened with the singing of the national anthem, led by two members of a local Girl Scout troop, and a performance of the traditional Chief Headdress Song by a native Alaskan dance troupe whose members are descended from the ancient Tsimshian people that roamed northern Canada and Alaska.

Judge Christen is the third Alaskan to sit on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, following in the footsteps of Judge Kleinfeld, who came onto the court in 1986, and the late Judge Robert Boochever, who was appointed in 1980.

Justice Christen, 50, previously served on the Alaska Supreme Court from 2009 to until her appointment to the federal bench. She also served as a judge of the Alaska Superior Court from 2001 to 2009, and was the presiding judge of the state's Third Judicial District from 2005 to 2009. Prior to coming onto the bench, Justice Christen worked in the Anchorage office of the law firm of Preston Thorgrimson Ellis & Holman (now K&L Gates LLP) from 1987 to 2001.

A Washington native, Justice Christen received her B.A. from the University of Washington in 1983 and her J.D. from Golden Gate University School of Law in 1986. She clerked for Alaska Superior Court Judge Brian Shortell in 1986.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals hears appeals of cases decided by executive branch agencies and federal trial courts in nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions. The court normally meets monthly in Seattle, San Francisco and Pasadena, California; every other month in Portland, Oregon; three times per year in Honolulu, Hawaii; and twice a year in Anchorage, Alaska. The court is authorized 29 judgeships and currently has two vacancies.

Judges of the federal appellate courts and federal district courts are appointed under Article III of the Constitution. They are nominated by the President, confirmed by the Senate and serve lifetime appointments upon good behavior.

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