



NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Courts Welcome Senate Introduction of Judgeship Bill

SAN FRANCISCO – Chief Judge Alex Kozinski of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit today welcomed the introduction of legislation authorizing additional judgeships for the nation's most overburdened federal courts, many of which are in the western states.

The Federal Judgeship Act of 2013 was introduced Tuesday (July 30) by Senator Patrick J. Leahy, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Senator Christopher A. Coons, chair of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Bankruptcy and the Courts. The bill would create 91 new federal judgeships in two federal circuits and 32 judicial districts across 21 states. It is based on the recommendations of the Judicial Conference of the United States, the national governing body for the federal courts.

“We appreciate this effort to provide the judiciary with additional resources. A number of courts here in the Ninth Circuit are struggling to contend with overwhelming caseloads. This bill would provide much needed relief to our judges and staff, and serve the public by ensuring swifter resolution of critical legal issues,” Judge Kozinski said.

If enacted, the bill would significantly expand the federal bench in the Ninth Circuit, which takes in nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions. The bill provides:

- Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals
4 additional permanent judgeships and 1 new temporary judgeship
- District of Arizona
6 additional permanent judgeships and 4 new temporary judgeships; also makes permanent 1 current temporary judgeship

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- Central District of California (Los Angeles)
10 additional permanent judgeships and 2 new temporary judgeships; also makes permanent 1 current temporary judgeship
- Eastern District of California (Sacramento/Fresno)
6 additional permanent judgeships and 1 new temporary judgeship
- Northern District of California (San Francisco)
5 additional permanent judgeships and 1 new temporary judgeship
- Southern District of California (San Diego)
3 additional permanent judgeships and 1 new temporary judgeship
- District of Idaho
1 additional permanent judgeship
- District of Nevada
1 additional permanent judgeship and 1 new temporary judgeship
- District of Oregon
1 new temporary judgeship
- Western District of Washington (Seattle)
2 additional permanent judgeships

The Ninth Circuit is the nation's largest and busiest judicial circuit. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals accounted for 22.1 percent of all appeals filed nationally in fiscal year 2012. District courts of the Ninth Circuit had the highest combined criminal caseload, accounting for 27 percent of all criminal filings and 24 percent of all criminal defendants in the nation. Much of the circuit's criminal docket involves illegal immigration and drug smuggling over the U.S.-Mexico border. The circuit's two border courts, the District of Arizona and the Southern District of California, ranked second and third in the nation, respectively, in the number of new felony filings per judgeship during the fiscal year.

The Eastern District of California is the circuit's most overloaded court, due largely to the many civil matters raised by inmates in state and federal prisons within the district. Weighted filings per judgeship, which takes into account the varying complexities of cases, was 1,132, ranking the court second in the nation. The average weighted filings per judgeship nationally was 520.