



U.S. Department of Justice
Executive Office for Immigration Review
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PRESS RELEASE

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July 29, 2026

EOIR Announces Regional Deputy Chief Immigration Judge, Administrative Law Judge, 37 Immigration Judges, and 4 Temporary Immigration Judges

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) today announced the swearing in of a regional deputy chief immigration judge within the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge, an administrative law judge within the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer, 37 immigration judges, and 4 temporary immigration judges.

Chief Immigration Judge Teresa L. Riley delivered remarks and administered the oath of office during an investiture, which was held today at the Department of Justice's Great Hall in Washington, D.C.

"We are pleased to welcome Regional Deputy Chief Immigration Judge Yamileth G. Davila to her leadership role at the immigration courts, Administrative Law Judge Paul M. Marian to the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer, and the newest class of immigration judges and temporary immigration judges to the agency," said Acting EOIR Director Sirce E. Owen. "EOIR has brought on new classes of adjudicators each month since February and we remain thankful that so many talented individuals are interested in the important and vital work that we do each and every day."

After a thorough application process, Acting Attorney General Blanche appointed Yamileth G. Davila to her new position as a regional deputy chief immigration judge, Paul M. Marian to his new position as an administrative law judge, Donna M. Bates, Albert J. Charanza Jr., Demetrius Tavares Cheeks, J Ed Christiansen, William D. Dill, Bret J. Engstrom, Stephen W. Harrell, Raymond J. Hartsough, Jennifer A. Henry, James V. Ingold, Nicole M. Jergovic, Warren R. Kaufman, D. Allen Kenny, Benjamin S. Kuipers, Ashley N. Lassiter, Louis J. Luba, Jr., Joseph Lucas, Aaron S. Ludwig, Shawn McCarver, David A. Melanson, Mark S. Miller, Ryan C. Painter, Gurney F. Pearsall III, Matthew D. "Matt" Pember, Jeffrey L. Phillips, Michael S. Rapiejko, K. Kaylin Render, Alexander Benjamin Rubin, Julina Schaeffer, Nickolaus T. Schlegel, Sharon M. Schnelle, Joseph Paul Secola, Michael A. Sullivan, Toniann Territola, Russell Wardlow, Lauren B. Watson, and James M. Worley Jr. to their new positions as immigration judges, and Kai V. Bernal-LeClaire, Stephen J. Faherty, Terry M. Meinecke, and William L. Richards III to their new positions as temporary immigration judges.

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These new adjudicators undergo a robust training program. Please see each new judge's [biographical summary](#).

— EOIR —



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EOIR Announces Regional Deputy Chief Immigration Judge, Administrative Law Judge, 37 Immigration Judges, and 4 Temporary Immigration Judges *Biographical Information*

Regional Deputy Chief Immigration Judge

Yamileth G. Davila, Regional Deputy Chief Immigration Judge - East

Yamileth G. Davila was appointed as a regional deputy chief immigration judge in July 2026. Judge Davila earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2002 from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Juris Doctorate in 2007 from the Howard University School of Law. From September 2025 to July 2026, she served as senior counsel to the Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. From September 2007 to September 2025, she served as assistant director in the Office of Immigration Litigation, Department of Justice, entering on duty as a trial attorney through the Attorney General's Honors Program. Judge Davila is a member of the Florida Bar.

Administrative Law Judge

Paul M. Marian, Administrative Law Judge, Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer

Paul M. Marian was appointed as an administrative law judge in July 2026. Judge Marian earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2006 from the University of California – Los Angeles, and a Juris Doctorate in 2011 from Baylor University. From 2018 to 2026, he served as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Texas, in its Brownsville and Houston offices, assigned to the general crimes, public corruption, and national security sections. From 2016 to 2018, he served as prosecutor with the Cameron County District Attorney's Office. Prior to 2016, he was in private practice. Judge Marian is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

Immigration Judges

Donna M. Bates, Immigration Judge, Newark Immigration Court

Donna M. Bates was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Bates earned a Bachelor of Science in 1992 from the United States Air Force Academy and a Juris Doctor in 2004 from Fordham University School of Law. From April 2018 to July 2026, she served as vice president and assistant general

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counsel for Cenlar FSB in Yardley, Pennsylvania. From August 2017 to April 2018, she served as an attorney at the Bayne Law Group LLC in Princeton, New Jersey. From March 2014 to May 2017, she served as of counsel in the consumer finance litigation practice group at Blank Rome LLP in Princeton, New Jersey. From March 2010 to March 2014, she served as a senior associate attorney in the business and finance litigation group at Reed Smith LLP in Princeton, New Jersey. From November 2007 to March 2010, she served as a senior associate attorney at Robinson Brog Leinwand Greene Genovese & Gluck PC in New York, New York. From October 2005 to November 2007, she served as a deputy district attorney in the District Attorney's Office, 4th Judicial District, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. From January 2002 to June 2005, she served as an associate attorney and associate intern at Postner & Rubin in New York, New York. From May 1994 to June 1997, she served as a protocol officer and flight commander in the U.S. Air Force at Misawa Air Base, Japan. From May 1992 to May 1994, she served as a section commander in the U.S. Air Force at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas. Judge Bates is a member of the New Jersey State Bar and the New York State Bar.

Albert J. Charanza Jr., Immigration Judge, Chicago Immigration Court

Albert J. Charanza Jr. was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Charanza earned a Bachelor of Science in 1987 from the University of Texas, Austin, and a Doctor of Jurisprudence in 1992 from South Texas College of Law, Houston. From August 2022 to June 2026, he served as an assistant district attorney with the Parker County District Attorney's Office in Weatherford, Texas. From April 2003 to July 2022, he served as a criminal defense attorney in federal and state courts for Charanza Law Office PC in Lufkin, Texas. From October 1998 to March 2003, he served as assistant district attorney for the Angelina County District Attorney's Office in Lufkin, Texas. From July 1996 to September 1998, he was a civil litigation attorney for Fenley & Bate LLP in Lufkin, Texas. From January 1993 to June 1996, he served on active duty as a judge advocate at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. After active duty, he continued serving in the Marine Corps Reserve as an intelligence officer and served in the Reserve Legal Support Section in various roles including as a staff judge advocate, and as a trial advocacy instructor, at the Naval Justice School in Newport, Rhode Island. In June 2016, Judge Charanza retired as a lieutenant colonel from the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve after 25 years of service. Judge Charanza is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

Demetrius Tavares Cheeks, Immigration Judge, Houston – Jefferson Street Immigration Court

Demetrius Tavares Cheeks was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Cheeks earned a Bachelor of Science in 2001 from Southern University at New Orleans and a Juris Doctor in 2004 from Southern University Law Center. From June 2021 to December 2024, he served as a hearing officer at the U.S. Coast Guard Hearing Office in Washington, D.C. From July 2019 to June 2021, he served as a senior attorney at the U.S. Coast Guard Counterintelligence Service in Washington, D.C. From June 2016 to July 2019, he served as chief, Command Services Division for the U.S. Coast Guard Legal Services Command in Alameda,

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California. From June 2013 to June 2016, he served as a principal legal advisor at the U.S. Coast Guard Intelligence Coordination Center in Washington, D.C. From June 2010 to June 2013, he served as a logistics officer at U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Juan in San Juan, Puerto Rico. From February 2006 to June 2013, he served as a staff attorney for the U.S. Coast Guard, Eighth Coast Guard District in New Orleans. Judge Cheeks is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

J Ed Christiansen, Immigration Judge, Aurora Immigration Court

J Ed Christiansen was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Christiansen earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1989 from the University of Utah and a Juris Doctor in 1992 from the University of Idaho College of Law. From April 2024 to July 2026, he served as chief of client services at Fort Riley, Kansas. From April 2016 to April 2024, he served as chief of legal assistance at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and as a special assistant U.S. attorney for the District of Utah. From August 2012 to April 2016, he was an attorney and partner with Day Shell & Liljenquist LC in Murray, Utah. From July 2008 to August 2012, he served as staff judge advocate at Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, California, and as a special assistant U.S. attorney for the Central District of California. From July 2007 to June 2008, he served as senior defense counsel at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. From July 2006 to June 2007, he served as commanding officer of Tenant Activities Company at Marine Corps Base Quantico. From August 2003 to June 2006, he served as an appellate defense counsel at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. From January to September 2005, he deployed to Iraq, where he served as officer in charge of the Central Criminal Court of Iraq Liaison Office at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. From July 2000 to August 2003, he served as deputy branch head for legal assistance policy at Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, D.C. From July 1994 to July 2000, he served in various positions as a judge advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps. Judge Christiansen is a member of the Idaho State Bar and Utah State Bar.

William D. Dill, Immigration Judge, Miami Immigration Court

William D. Dill was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Dill earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1991 from the University of South Alabama and a Juris Doctor in 1994 from the University of Alabama School of Law. From January 2025 to July 2026, he served as an assistant U.S. attorney for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Oklahoma, Department of Justice, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. From May 2011 to December 2024, he served as an assistant attorney general in the Criminal Appeals and Capital Litigation divisions of the Alabama Attorney General's Office, in Montgomery, Alabama. From May 2004 to April 2011, he served as a deputy attorney general in the Violent Crimes Division of the Alabama Attorney General's Office, in Montgomery, Alabama. From January 2003 to May 2004, he served as a deputy legal advisor and legal advisor for the Office of the Governor of the State of Alabama in Montgomery, Alabama. From December 1996 to January 2003, he served as a prosecutor for the Alabama Attorney General's Office, in Montgomery, Alabama. From October 1994 to December 1996, he served as an assistant district attorney for the Office of the District Attorney in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Judge Dill is a member of the Alabama State Bar.

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Bret J. Engstrom, Immigration Judge, Eloy Immigration Court

Bret J. Engstrom was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Engstrom earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2009 from Arizona State University and a Juris Doctor in 2012 from the University of Wyoming College of Law. From April 2020 to July 2026, he served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in Eloy, Arizona. From October 2016 to April 2020, he was a partner with the Americas Law Group PLLC in Mesa, Arizona. From December 2014 to April 2016, he was a solo practitioner with Eng law Group PLLC in Mesa, Arizona. From October 2013 to December 2014, he was an associate with McLean Law Firm PLC in Phoenix. Judge Engstrom is a member of the State Bar of Arizona.

Stephen W. Harrell, Immigration Judge, Chicago Immigration Court

Stephen W. Harrell was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Harrell earned a Bachelor of Science in 2012 from Illinois State University and a Juris Doctorate in 2017 from the Northern Illinois University College of Law. From December 2020 to July 2026, he served as a judge advocate in the U.S. Army, holding assignments as a special trial counsel at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington; as a military defense counsel at Fort Stewart, Georgia; and as a brigade judge advocate with the Illinois Army National Guard. He is currently serving as a judge advocate in the U.S. Army Reserve and holds the rank of captain. From August 2020 to February 2022, he served as a felony assistant state's attorney at the McLean County State's Attorney's Office in Bloomington, Illinois. From May 2018 to July 2020, he served as a misdemeanor assistant state's attorney at the DeKalb County State's Attorney's Office in Sycamore, Illinois. Judge Harrell is a member of the Illinois State Bar.

Raymond J. Hartsough, Immigration Judge, Sterling Immigration Court

Raymond J. Hartsough was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Hartsough earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2014 from Youngstown State University, a Master of Business Administration in 2017 from the University of Akron, and a Juris Doctorate and a Master of Laws in 2017 from the University of Akron School of Law. From February 2024 to July 2026, he served as a magistrate in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas in Akron, Ohio. From January 2023 to February 2024, he served as the assistant chief legal counsel for the Ohio Secretary of State in Columbus. From September 2021 to January 2023, he served as an assistant prosecuting attorney in the Mahoning County Prosecutor's Office in Youngstown, Ohio. From December 2018 to September 2021, he served as an assistant prosecuting attorney in the Summit County Prosecutor's Office in Akron, Ohio. Judge Hartsough is a member of the Ohio State Bar.

Jennifer A. Henry, Immigration Judge, New York – Federal Plaza Immigration Court

Jennifer A. Henry was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Henry earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1990 from California State University, Sacramento, and a Juris Doctor in 1993 from Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law

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Center. From January 2009 to July 2026, she served as a judge of the First District Court, in Suffolk County, New York. From January 2021 to July 2026, she served as an acting county court judge in Suffolk County, New York, for the Drug Treatment Court. From April 2002 to October 2007, she served as principal law secretary to an acting justice of the New York State Supreme Court in Riverhead, New York. From August 1993 to May 1999, she served as an assistant district attorney with the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office in Central Islip and Riverhead, New York. Judge Henry is a member of the New York State Bar.

James V. Ingold, Immigration Judge, Richmond Immigration Adjudication Center

James V. Ingold was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Ingold earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1986 from Duke University and a Juris Doctor in 1990 from the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at the College of William & Mary. From December 2024 to January 2026, he served as panel clerk at the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation in Washington, D.C. From June 2009 to December 2024, he served as chief deputy clerk at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia. From October 2002 to June 2009, he served as special counsel and senior assistant attorney general at the Office of the Attorney General of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia, and in Fairfax, Virginia. From October 1993 to October 2002, he was in private practice at the law firm of Chadwick, Washington, Moriarty, Elmore & Bunn PC in Fairfax, Virginia. From August 1992 to May 1993, he was in private practice at the law firm of Katz & Stone in Tysons Corner, Virginia. From October 1990 to August 1992, he was in private practice at the law firm of Daniel Vaughan in Danville, Virginia. Judge Ingold is a member of the Virginia State Bar.

Nicole M. Jergovic, Immigration Judge, Boston Immigration Court

Nicole M. Jergovic was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Jergovic earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1997 from Marquette University and a Juris Doctor in 2000 from Marquette University Law School. From February 2025 to July 2026, she was the program manager for the Law Enforcement Training Center at Humane World for Animals in Washington, D.C. From January 2024 to February 2025, she was in-house counsel for CrowdDoing. From November 2023 to February 2025, she was a contract attorney for the Animal Legal Defense Fund in Cotati, California. From June 2003 to June 2023, she served as a lead level III deputy district attorney with the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, in Portland, Oregon. Judge Jergovic is a member of the Oregon State Bar.

Warren R. Kaufman, Immigration Judge, San Antonio Immigration Court

Warren R. Kaufman was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Kaufman earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1984 from the University of Texas at Austin and a Juris Doctor in 1987 from Southern Methodist University School of Law. From 2022 to July 2026, he served as an assistant U.S. attorney with the Asset Recovery Division, U.S. Attorney's Office, Department of Justice, in San Antonio, Texas. From 2007 to 2022, he served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in San Antonio. From 2000 to 2006, he was in private practice in

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San Antonio. From 1997 to 1999, he was assistant general counsel for Micro Warehouse Ltd., in London. From 1994 to 1997, he was general counsel for Laboratoires Galderma SA, in Paris. From 1988 to 1994, he was an associate with Goodrich, Riquelme y Asociados, in Mexico City and in Paris. Judge Kaufman is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

D. Allen Kenny, Immigration Judge, Memphis Immigration Court

D. Allen Kenny was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Kenny earned a Bachelor of Science in 1986 from the University of Nebraska and a Juris Doctorate in 1993 from the University of Nebraska College of Law. From April 2004 to July 2026, he served as the deputy chief and associate counsel for the Office of Chief Counsel, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in Lincoln, Nebraska. From March 2003 to June 2004, he served as a general attorney with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, DHS, in Omaha, Nebraska. From September 1993 to March 2003, he served as a general attorney with the former Immigration and Naturalization Service in Omaha, Nebraska, and El Paso, Texas. From December 1986 to August 1990, he served on active duty as an officer in the U.S. Navy before transferring to the Naval Reserves where he retired at the rank of captain in January 2017. Judge Kenny is a member of the Nebraska State Bar.

Benjamin S. Kuipers, Immigration Judge, Otero Immigration Court

Benjamin S. Kuipers was appointed as an immigration judge in July 2026 after serving as a temporary immigration judge at the Phoenix Immigration Court from February to July 2026. Judge Kuipers earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2005 from Hillsdale College and a Juris Doctor in 2009 from the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. From 2024 to January 2026, he served as a deputy county attorney with the Yavapai County Attorney's Office in Prescott, Arizona. From 2023 to 2024, he served as a task force judge advocate for the U.S. Army in Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, advising on operational law. From 2021 to 2023, he served as a senior trial defense counsel for the Arizona Army National Guard. From 2019 to 2021, he was the legal officer in charge for Operation Guardian Support, a joint task force with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security. From 2011 to 2023, he was the founder and managing partner of Kuipers Law PLLC. From 2009 to 2011, he worked at an insurance defense firm. He holds the rank of major in the Arizona Army National Guard. Judge Kuipers is a member of the State Bar of Arizona.

Ashley N. Lassiter, Immigration Judge, Stewart Immigration Court

Ashley N. Lassiter was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Lassiter earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2013 from Duke University and a Juris Doctor in 2016 from the University of Richmond School of Law. From August 2019 until July 2026, she served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in Atlanta. From December 2016 until July 2019, she served as a domestic violence attorney for the Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society in Christiansburg,

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Virginia. Judge Lassiter is a member of the North Carolina Bar, the State Bar of Georgia, and the Virginia State Bar.

Louis J. Luba Jr., Immigration Judge, New York – Federal Plaza Immigration Court

Louis J. Luba Jr. was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Luba earned a Bachelor of Science in 1989 from the Rochester Institute of Technology, concurrent Juris Doctor and Master of Public Administration degrees in 1993 from Syracuse University College of Law and Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs, and a Master of Arts in 2012 from American Military University. From 1995 to 2025, he served in various positions within the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice, including supervisory assistant state's attorney in the Windham Judicial District, senior assistant state's attorney in the Windham and New Britain Judicial Districts, and deputy assistant state's attorney in the Special Investigations Unit/Statewide Prosecution Bureau of the Office of the Chief State's Attorney. Judge Luba served in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve from 1996 to 2016, attaining the rank of commander, with assignments as a judge advocate in the First Coast Guard District and at Coast Guard Headquarters, as well as executive officer and deployable specialized forces liaison roles, including combat deployment in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Judge Luba is a member of the Connecticut Bar and the New York State Bar.

Joseph Lucas, Immigration Judge, Portland Immigration Court

Joseph Lucas was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Lucas earned a Bachelor of Science in 2007 from the University of Oregon, a Doctor of Jurisprudence in 2011 from Willamette University College of Law, and a Doctor of Philosophy in 2015 from Walden University. From May 2025 to February 2026, he served as an assistant legal counsel at Clackamas County in Oregon City, Oregon. From July 2021 to May 2025, he served as an administrative law judge at the Office of Administrative Hearings for the State of Oregon. From September 2016 through December 2020, he served as the Harney County district attorney in Burns, Oregon, after serving as a deputy district attorney from November 2011 to August 2016. Judge Lucas is a member of the Oregon State Bar.

Aaron S. Ludwig, Immigration Judge, Eloy Immigration Court

Aaron S. Ludwig was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Ludwig earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1994 from the University of Arizona and a Juris Doctor in 1997 from the Whittier College School of Law. From February 2023 to July 2026, he was a partner at Counxel Legal Firm in Mesa, Arizona. From September 2020 to February 2023, he was the managing partner of Ludwig Law Offices in Phoenix. From January 2015 to September 2020, he was the managing director of The Counterracketeering Group in Phoenix. From November 2010 to January 2015, he served as assistant attorney general and chief racketeering prosecutor for the Arizona Attorney General's Office in Phoenix. From January 2004 to December 2013, he served as judge pro tempore of the Superior Court of Arizona – Maricopa County in Phoenix. From January 2007 to November 2010, he served as a prosecutor for the Securities

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Division of the Arizona Corporation Commission in Phoenix. From January 2006 to January 2007, he served as a prosecutor for the Maricopa County Attorney's Office. From May 1997 to January 2006, he was the vice president and general counsel of Fiduciary Advisors in Phoenix. Judge Ludwig is a member of the State Bar of Arizona.

Shawn McCarver, Immigration Judge, Kansas City Immigration Court

Shawn McCarver was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge McCarver earned a Bachelor of Science in 1981 from Central Missouri State University and a Juris Doctor in 1984 from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law. From September 1984 to December 2010, and, from January 2019 to July 2026, he was an attorney in Farmington, Missouri. From January 2011 to December 2018, he was an associate circuit judge of the 24th Circuit in Missouri. From May 1985 to December 2010, he was a municipal judge of the 24th Circuit in Missouri. Judge McCarver is a member of the Missouri Bar.

David A. Melanson, Immigration Judge, Hartford Immigration Court

David A. Melanson was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Melanson earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2014 from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a Juris Doctor in 2018 from the University of Massachusetts School of Law. From January 2019 to July 2026, he served as an assistant district attorney at the Hampden County District Attorney's Office in Springfield, Massachusetts. Judge Melanson is a member of the Massachusetts Bar.

Mark S. Miller, Immigration Judge, Orlando Immigration Court

Mark S. Miller was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Miller earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2002 from the University of Florida and a Juris Doctor in 2011 from Florida A&M University College of Law. From November 2024 to July 2026, he served as a county court judge at the Ninth Judicial Circuit in Orlando, Florida. From October 2023 to November 2024, he was a managing attorney at Morgan & Morgan in Orlando, Florida. From August 2021 to October 2023, he was a partner at the FL DUI Group in Orlando, Florida. From August 2016 to August 2021, he served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in San Antonio, Miami, and Atlanta. From October 2014 to August 2016, he was a litigation associate at Albertelli Law in Tampa, Florida. From October 2013 to October 2014, he was an associate attorney at the Law Offices of Jaeger and Blankner in Orlando, Florida. From December 2012 to October 2013, he served as an assistant state attorney with the Ninth Judicial Circuit in Kissimmee, Florida. Judge Miller is a member of the Florida Bar.

Ryan C. Painter, Immigration Judge, Indianapolis Immigration Court

Ryan C. Painter was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Painter earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2001 from the University of Michigan and a Juris Doctor in 2004 from the University of Notre Dame Law School. From June 2024 to July 2026, he served as the chief executive officer at Shiawassee Health and Wellness, in Owosso, Michigan. From May 2022 to June 2024, he served as an

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assistant attorney general at the Michigan Department of Attorney General in Lansing, Michigan. From October 2021 to March 2022, he served as an assistant prosecuting attorney at the Ingham County Office of the Prosecuting Attorney in Lansing, Michigan. From January 2021 to September 2021, he served as senior associate at Braun Kendrick Finkbeiner PLC in Saginaw, Michigan. From April 2015 to January 2021, he served as director of the elder abuse program at the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan in Lansing, Michigan. From April 2013 to April 2015, he served as an assistant prosecuting attorney at the Shiawassee County Office of Prosecuting Attorney in Corunna, Michigan. From January 2010 to April 2013, he was an associate attorney at Rollo, Harter and Poling LLP in Huntington, Indiana. From November 2005 to December 2009, he served as a deputy prosecuting attorney in South Bend and Scottsville, Indiana. From January 2004 to October 2005, he served as a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Paul Maloney, in St. Joseph, Michigan. Judge Painter is a member of the State Bar of Michigan.

Gurney F. Pearsall III, Immigration Judge, Hyattsville Immigration Court

Gurney F. Pearsall III was appointed as an immigration judge in July 2026 after serving as a temporary immigration judge since February 2026. Judge Pearsall earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 2013 from Yeshiva University and a Juris Doctor in 2016 from the University of Colorado School of Law. From November 2016 to January 2026, he worked in private practice with a focus on appellate litigation. Since March 2017, he has also served in the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the U.S. Army Reserve. Judge Pearsall is a member of the New York State Bar and the State Bar of Texas.

Matthew D. "Matt" Pember, Immigration Judge, Concord Immigration Court

Matthew D. "Matt" Pember was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Pember earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science in 1996 from the College of Idaho and a Juris Doctor in 2004 from the University of Idaho College of Law. From July 2025 to July 2026, he was the interim manager/felony attorney for the Idaho State Public Defender – Jerome office. He has served as a prosecuting attorney for most of his career, including being the elected prosecutor of Gooding County, Idaho. He has also served as an attorney advisor for the Department of the Navy and the Small Business Administration. Judge Pember is a member of the Idaho State Bar.

Jeffrey L. Phillips, Immigration Judge, Concord Immigration Court

Jeffrey L. Phillips was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Phillips earned a Bachelor of Science in 2011 from Idaho State University and a Juris Doctor in 2015 from the University of Minnesota. From June 2022 to July 2026, he was an associate judge for the Nez Perce Tribe in Lapwai, Idaho. From June 2022 to July 2026, he also served as a deputy prosecuting attorney at Payette County, Idaho, taking a leave of absence during which he was an associate at Jacques Law PLLC from December 2023 to September 2024. From July 2019 to May 2022, he served as the elected prosecuting attorney for Owyhee County, Idaho. From July 2017 to July 2019, he served as a deputy prosecuting attorney in Canyon County, Idaho, and

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from September 2015 to July 2017, as an assistant tribal prosecutor. Judge Phillips is a member of the Idaho State Bar.

Michael S. Rapiejko, Immigration Judge, Florence Immigration Court

Michael S. Rapiejko was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Rapiejko earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2003 from the University of Maryland, a Master of Arts in 2012 from Northern Arizona University, and a Juris Doctor in 2018 from Quinnipiac University School of Law. From July 2025 to July 2026, he served as counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in Eloy, Arizona. From April 2024 to July 2025, he served as a legal specialist with the Office of Professional Responsibility, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Department of the Treasury (DOT), in Parsippany, New Jersey. From August 2018 to April 2024, he served as an attorney with the Office of Chief Counsel, IRS, DOT, in Newark, New Jersey. Judge Rapiejko is a member of the District of Columbia Bar.

K. Kaylin Render, Immigration Judge, Memphis Immigration Court

K. Kaylin Render was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Render earned her Bachelor of Arts in 1994 from Emory & Henry University and a Juris Doctorate in 1997 from Cumberland School of Law. From September 2005 to July 2026, she served as an assistant district attorney for the 2nd Judicial District Attorney's Office in Sullivan County, Tennessee. From 1998 to 2004, she was a solo practitioner in Mount Carmel, Tennessee. Judge Render is a member of the Tennessee Bar.

Alexander Benjamin Rubin, Immigration Judge, Buffalo Immigration Court

Alexander Benjamin Rubin was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Rubin earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2009 from Brooklyn College and a Juris Doctor in 2012 from Brooklyn Law School. From December 2014 to July 2026, he was an attorney at the Law Office of Alexander Benjamin Rubin, in Brooklyn, New York. From May 2019 to July 2026, he served as a judicial hearing officer with the New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings, in New York, New York. Judge Rubin is a member of the New York State Bar.

Julina Schaeffer, Immigration Judge, Las Vegas Immigration Court

Julina Schaeffer was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Schaeffer earned a Bachelor of Science in 2005 from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a Juris Doctor in 2017 from Seton Hall University School of Law. From March 2020 to July 2026, she served as an assistant chief counsel and associate regional counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in New York, New York. During that time, from October 2023 to March 2026, she served as a Homeland Security Investigations embedded attorney. From September 2018 to March 2020, she worked as an associate at Tompkins, McGuire, Wachenfeld and Barry LLC, in Roseland, New Jersey. From September 2017 to September 2018, she served as a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Walter Koprowski Jr., Presiding Judge of the

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Chancery Division, Essex County, New Jersey. Judge Schaeffer is a member of the New Jersey State Bar and the New York State Bar.

Nickolaus T. Schlegel, Immigration Judge, Otay Mesa Immigration Court

Nickolaus T. Schlegel was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Schlegel earned a Bachelor of Science in 2014 from Northern Arizona University and a Juris Doctor in 2018 from the Creighton University School of Law. From July 2025 to July 2026, he served as counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in San Diego. From September of 2019 to July of 2025, he served as an attorney advisor with the Executive Office for Immigration Review, Department of Justice, at the San Diego Immigration Court from 2023 to 2025, the Phoenix Immigration Court from 2021 to 2023, and the Eloy Immigration Court from 2019 to 2021, entering on duty through the Attorney General's Honors Program. From August 2018 to September 2019, he served as a law clerk for the Honorable Judge Renee T. Bennett of the Superior Court of Arizona in Pima County. Judge Schlegel is a member of the State Bar of California.

Sharon M. Schnelle, Immigration Judge, Memphis Immigration Court

Sharon M. Schnelle was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Schnelle earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1992 from California State University at Fullerton, a Master of Science in 1997 from East Tennessee State University, and a Juris Doctor in 2015 from Capital University Law School. Since 2025, she served as an assistant chief counsel at the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in Nashville, Tennessee. Most recently, she served as a special assistant U.S. attorney for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District Tennessee in Nashville, Tennessee. From 2022 to 2025, she served as staff attorney III at the Department of Public Advocacy, Commonwealth of Kentucky, Somerset Trial Office. From 2016 to 2022, she was a sole practitioner at the Law Office of Sharon M. Schnelle LLC in Cincinnati. Judge Schnelle is a member of the Kentucky Bar Association and the Ohio Bar Association.

Joseph Paul Secola, Immigration Judge, Conroe Immigration Court

Joseph Paul Secola was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Secola earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1981 from Fairfield University, a Juris Doctor in 1984 from O.W. Coburn School of Law, and a Master of Laws in 2018 from Western New England University School of Law. From 1984 to July 2026, he served as attorney and counselor at law in private practice in Connecticut, New York, and Texas. From 2001 to 2011, he also served as judge of probate for the District of Brookfield, State of Connecticut. Judge Secola is a member of the Connecticut Bar, the New York State Bar, and the State Bar of Texas.

Michael A. Sullivan, Immigration Judge, Chelmsford Immigration Court

Michael A. Sullivan was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Sullivan earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1985 from the University of Notre Dame and a Juris Doctor in 1988 from Fordham University School of Law. From

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October 2003 to September 2025, he served as an assistant U.S. attorney with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio in Cleveland. From May 1996 to October 2003, he served as an assistant prosecuting attorney at the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office in Cleveland. From August 1988 to April 1996, he served as an assistant district attorney at the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office in Riverhead, New York. Judge Sullivan is a member of the New York State Bar and the Ohio State Bar.

Toniann Territola, Immigration Judge, New York – Federal Plaza Immigration Court

Toniann Territola was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Territola earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2015 from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master of Public Administration in 2019 from New York University, and a Juris Doctor in 2019 from Brooklyn Law School. From February 2024 to July 2026, she served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in New York. From April 2023 to February 2024, she served as an assistant U.S. attorney with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. From September 2021 to April 2023, she served as an attorney advisor for the New York – Varick Immigration Court, Executive Office for Immigration Review, Department of Justice. From September 2019 to September 2021, she served as a judicial law clerk and attorney advisor for the New York – Varick Immigration Court entering on duty through the Attorney General's Honors Program. Judge Territola is a member of the New York State Bar.

Russell Wardlow, Immigration Judge, Oakdale Immigration Court

Russell Wardlow was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Wardlow earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2003 from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Juris Doctor in 2006 from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law. From July 2018 to July 2026, he was a senior attorney at the Office of Chief Counsel, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, El Paso, Texas. From June 2015 to July 2018, he served as a labor attorney at Fort Bliss, Texas. From July 2007 to June 2015, he served as an active-duty judge advocate with the U.S. Army at various locations throughout the United States. Judge Wardlow is a member of the State Bar of California.

Lauren B. Watson, Immigration Judge, Kansas City Immigration Court

Lauren B. Watson was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Watson earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2012 from the University of Kansas and a Juris Doctor in 2016 from the University of Kansas School of Law. From March 2025 to July 2026, she was an assistant attorney general at the Office of the Attorney General of Kansas, Economic Crimes Division, in Topeka, Kansas. From August 2021 to March 2025, she served as an assistant district attorney at the Jonson County District Attorney's Office, in Olathe, Kansas. From December 2016 to August 2021, she served as an assistant city prosecutor in the City Prosecutor's Office, City of Lawrence, Kansas. Judge Watson is a member of the Kansas Bar.

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James M. Worley Jr., Immigration Judge, Conroe Immigration Court

James Worley was appointed as an immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Worley earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1999 from Abilene Christian University and a Juris Doctorate in 2003 from Texas Wesleyan University School of Law. From July 2017 to July 2026, he served as an assistant district attorney at the Dallas County Criminal District Attorney's Office in Dallas. From June 2015 to July 2017, he was in private practice as a criminal defense attorney in Bedford, Texas. From July 2007 to June 2015, he served as an assistant district attorney at the Dallas County Criminal District Attorney's Office in Dallas. From April 2006 to July 2007, he served as an assistant county attorney at the Williamson County Attorney's Office in Georgetown, Texas. From October 2004 to January 2006, he was an associate attorney at Bailey & Galyen in Bedford, Texas. From April 2004 to October 2004, he was an associate attorney at the Law Office of Robert S. Lenz in Fort Worth, Texas. Judge Worley is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

Temporary Immigration Judges

Kai V. Bernal-LeClaire, Temporary Immigration Judge, Chelmsford Immigration Court

Kai V. Bernal-LeClaire was appointed as a temporary immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Bernal-LeClaire earned a Bachelor of Science in 2003 from the University of Florida, a Master of Science in 2004 from the University of Florida, and a Doctor of Jurisprudence in 2008 from the University of Texas at Austin School of Law. From January 2017 to July 2026, he served as an assistant and associate counsel with the Office of the General Counsel, Department of the Navy, at Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport, Newport, Rhode Island; Naval Surface Warfare Center Philadelphia Division; and Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, D.C. He also served in various positions as judge advocate with the U.S. Navy from August 2008 to January 2017 including two deployments at sea aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and one deployment to Iraq. Judge Bernal-LeClaire holds the rank of commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve. Judge Bernal-LeClaire is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

Stephen J. Faherty, Temporary Immigration Judge, Miami Krome (Detained) Immigration Court

Stephen J. Faherty Jr. was appointed as a temporary immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Faherty earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in 1991 from the College of William and Mary, a Master of Business Administration in 1996 from St. Louis University School of Business, and a Juris Doctor in 1996 from St. Louis University School of Law. From January 2020 to May 2026, he was an associate counsel at the Naval Air Warfare Center, Training Systems Division, in Orlando, Florida. From July 2008 to January 2020, he served as an attorney advisor at the Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation in Orlando, Florida. From March 2006 to July 2008, he was a senior analyst at the Government Accountability Office in Washington, D.C. From September 2004 to March 2006, he was a senior manager and corporate counsel at Bradson Corporation in Arlington, Virginia.

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From December 2002 to July 2004, he was a project manager at Applied Discovery Inc. in Washington, D.C. From April 1999 to December 2002, he was an attorney at Howrey, Simon, Arnold & White in Washington, D.C. From August 1997 to March 1999, he was an attorney at Interim Legal Services in Washington, D.C. Since 2002 he has served as a judge advocate in the Army Reserve and District of Columbia National Guard. Judge Faherty is a member of the District of Columbia Bar and the Virginia State Bar.

Terry M. Meinecke, Temporary Immigration Judge, Chelmsford Immigration Court

Terry M. Meinecke was appointed as a temporary immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Meinecke earned a Bachelor of Science in 1993 from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a Juris Doctorate in 1999 from the University of Nebraska College of Law. From October of 2007 to July 2026, he served as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina. From April 2001 to September 2007, he served as an assistant district attorney in Davidson County, North Carolina. From August of 1999 to December of 2000, he was an associate at the law firm of DeMars, Gordon, Olsen & Shively in Lincoln, Nebraska. Since June 2002, he has served as a judge advocate in the U.S. Army Reserve in a variety of positions including Team Chief for the 134th LOD, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, and the 12th LOD, Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. He was mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2005 and 2011, and in both instances served as a military prosecutor with the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, XVIII Airborne Corps at Ft. Bragg. He holds the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. Judge Meinecke is a member of the North Carolina Bar.

William L. Richards III, Temporary Immigration Judge, New York – Varick Immigration Court

William L. Richards III was appointed as a temporary immigration judge to begin hearing cases in July 2026. Judge Richards earned a Bachelor of Science in 2011 and a Master of Business Administration in 2012 from Sacred Heart University, and a Juris Doctor in 2015 from New York Law School. From March 2026 to June 2026, he served as a special assistant U.S. attorney for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota. From March 2020 to March 2026, he served as a senior assistant district attorney for the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, New York. From August 2016 to March 2020, he served as an assistant district attorney for the Queens County District Attorney's Office in New York. From August 2015 to July 2016, he served as an attorney with the New York Legal Assistance Group in New York. Judge Richards serves as a defense counsel in the judge advocate general corps for the U.S. Army Reserve and holds the rank of captain. Judge Richards is a member of the New York State Bar.

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