

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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Contact: Joel Daly
(312) 435-5693 (phone)
(312) 554-8239 (fax)
joel_daly@ilnd.uscourts.gov

CHIEF JUDGE JAMES F. HOLDERMAN DELIVERS HIS FINAL “STATE OF THE COURT” ADDRESS

CHICAGO – On Wednesday, May 15, 2013, Chief Judge Holderman presented his seventh and final “State of the Court” address. His seven-year term as chief judge expires July 1, 2013, and Judge Ruben Castillo will take over as the court’s chief judge at that time. Chief Judge Holderman, as he has for the last six years, reported that the state of the court remains “Good,” at least through September 30, 2013, the end of the government’s fiscal year, but that proposed further budget cuts and diminished funding may require a decrease in services in the future. Judge Holderman said, “In a nutshell, filings are up and funding is down.”

Civil filings were up for the fifth straight year in 2012 at 10,859, which is the highest total of civil case filings in twenty-five years, and is up 43% since 2006, when Judge Holderman became the chief judge. Among the categories of civil cases that saw the highest increase were those filed by *pro se* litigants, which were up 18.8% in 2012 (1101 cases) over 2011 (927 cases), up 362.6% since 2006, when there were only 236 *pro se* civil cases filed. On the criminal side, the number of felony defendants indicted rose 4.3% in 2012 (940) over the 2011 (901) totals, but was down from the 2010 total of 1,006.

Jury trials topped out in 2011 at 177 civil and criminal jury trials. In 2012 there were only 168 jury trials. The 2011 and 2012 annual jury trial totals represent the largest number of jury trials in any combined two-year period as far back as records have been kept in the court’s history. The total trials, which include bench trials, for 2011 were 159 civil trials and 53 criminal trials. The total trials, including those to the bench, during 2012 were 120 civil trials and 74 criminal trials.

Patent case filings continued to rise in 2012 (247) over 2011 (239), as Judge Holderman predicted at his address last year. This trend began when the district’s Local Patent Rules went into effect in 2009 when only 143 new patent cases were filed.

The court continues to remain in the top 10% of district courts in efficiency with a median time to disposition of 6.5 months for civil cases. The court also ranks second in the nation in the number of multi-district litigation cases being handled by its judges, with a total of 1,350 currently pending.

Previously contemplated furloughs of court staff and closures of the court have been avoided by the court not filling staff vacancies that have occurred. The Clerk's Office is now functioning with 67% of its allocated staff. Probation Department personnel, however, may have to each take up to three days of unpaid furloughs before the end of this fiscal year because of deficiencies in funding provided to that court unit.

New District Judges John Z. Lee and John J. Tharp, Jr. joined the court in 2012, and Judge Thomas Durkin in January 2013. Eastern Division Magistrate Judges Mary Rowland and Daniel Martin were both sworn in on October 1, 2012, following the retirement of Magistrate Judges Nan Nolan and Morton Denlow on September 30, 2012. In the Western Division, Magistrate Judge Iain Johnston joined the court on May 4, 2013, after recalled Magistrate Judge P. Michael Mahoney's retirement. Judge Holderman thanked the Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panels chaired by Ms. Aurora Abella-Austriaco in the Eastern Division and Chief Judge Val Gunnarsson of the 15th Judicial Circuit in Carroll County in the Western Division for their excellent work. Additionally, Bankruptcy Judge Thomas Lynch replaced Bankruptcy Judge Manuel Barbosa on January 1, 2013.

That Northern District of Illinois had three vacancies at the beginning of 2012 and four vacancies at the beginning of 2013. There are three vacancies currently, all in the Eastern Division. Chief Judge Holderman noted the cooperative efforts of Senators Dick Durbin and Mark Kirk to fill this court's vacancies as promptly as politically possible.

Judge Holderman thanked all of the judges, court staff, and members of the bar for their support during his term as chief judge. He noted a total of eight, more than a third, of the active judges on the court joined during his seven-year term, and he stated he looks forward to the bright future of the court because of these excellent new judges who have joined an already outstanding group of jurists.

Judge Holderman also stated, "Having known Judge Ruben Castillo for many years, back to when he was an assistant U.S. attorney, I know he will be an outstanding leader and an outstanding chief judge. The court is in good hands as we face the challenges ahead."