

Court Information Release



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

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the Northern District of Illinois
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U.S. District Court selects Daniel P. McLaughlin and Laura K. McNally to serve as U.S. Magistrate Judges for the Northern District of Illinois

CHICAGO, Ill.- Chief Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer announced today that the U.S. District Court has selected Daniel P. McLaughlin and Laura K. McNally to be the next United States Magistrate Judges for the Northern District of Illinois. Mr. McLaughlin has been designated to fill the magistrate judge vacancy created when then-Magistrate Judge Sunil Harjani was confirmed as an United States District Judge. Ms. McNally has been designated to fill the vacancy created when Magistrate Judge Shelia Finnegan retires on January 2, 2025.

“We are excited that Mr. McLaughlin and Ms. McNally will be joining our distinguished Magistrate Judge bench in the Northern District of Illinois. Mr. McLaughlin is an accomplished staff attorney with the Federal Defender Program and has experience representing parties in civil litigation. Ms. McNally is a seasoned litigator with extensive experience in complex commercial and federal criminal matters and has demonstrated a career-long commitment to pro bono service,” said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

Chief Judge Pallmeyer added, “Mr. McLaughlin and Ms. McNally will be outstanding additions to our court. They will be joining the hardest working and most dedicated magistrate judges in the nation. On behalf of the Court, I would like to express our gratitude to the many talented lawyers who applied for this position. We also want to publicly recognize the distinguished Merit Selection Panel for their voluntary service in interviewing applicants and selecting finalists.”

Mr. McLaughlin is currently a staff attorney with the Federal Defender Program for the Northern District of Illinois. He assumed this position in March 2008. Prior to joining the Federal Defender Program, he was an associate attorney with Jenner & Block for approximately four years. He earned his law degree from the University of Illinois College of Law in 2004 and his undergraduate degree from Marquette University in 1999. In 2018, Mr. McLaughlin received the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association’s Award for Excellence in Public Service.

Since 2015, Ms. McNally has served as a litigation partner at Loeb & Loeb LLP where she is a trial lawyer for complex commercial and criminal matters. In addition, Ms. McNally chairs the firm's Chicago Pro Bono Committee. She was awarded the Northern District's Award for Excellence in Pro Bono Award Service in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Prior to joining Loeb & Loeb LLP, Ms. McNally worked as a partner with Grippo & Elden LLC and an associate with Arnold & Porter in their Washington D.C. office. Ms. McNally previously served as Law Clerk to the Honorable F. A. Little, Jr. of the Western District of Louisiana. Ms. McNally earned her undergraduate degree from Northwestern University in 1991 and her law degree from Tulane Law School in 1994.

The selection of a magistrate judge is governed by statute and by regulations adopted by the Judicial Conference of the United States. The Court had the assistance of a Merit Selection Panel, which screened and interviewed candidates and made a recommendation to the district judges of five applicants it found best qualified. The Panel, comprised of both attorneys and non-attorneys, was chaired by Ms. Eileen Letts. Members of the Panel included Mr. Theodore T. Chung, Hon. Grace G. Dickler (Ret.), Mr. Joseph M. Gagliardo, Ms. Verneé Green, Ms. Nathalina Hudson, Ms. Spiridoula (Litza) Mavrothalasitis, Ms. Meghan C. Morrissey, Ms. Amanda Gabriela Penabad, Mr. Nigel F. Telman, Ms. Kali Thomas, Mr. Jeffrey S. Torosian, Hon. Debra B. Walker, and Hon. Edward Washington, II (Ret.).

The magistrate judge position requires a minimum of five years as a member in good standing of the bar of the highest court of a state and at least five years of active practice of law. The term of office for a magistrate judge is eight years, with the opportunity of renewal of additional terms.

Magistrate judges perform a variety of duties for the court, including conducting preliminary proceedings in federal criminal cases and the trial and disposition of federal misdemeanor cases upon consent of the litigants. They conduct various pretrial matters and evidentiary proceedings upon referral from a district judge of the court and the trial and disposition of federal civil cases upon consent of the litigants.

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