



Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
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**Statement of Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer
On the Passing of Judge Manuel Barbosa**

Retired U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Manuel “Manny” Barbosa, age 72, died on Monday, November 25, 2019, following a brief illness.

In 1998, Judge Barbosa became the first Hispanic to sit on the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois. He served in the Court’s Western Division until his retirement in 2013.

Judge Barbosa earned his undergraduate degree from Benedictine University and held several jobs, including as a teacher, before earning his law degree from John Marshall Law School. Prior to joining the Bankruptcy Court, he worked as an assistant state’s attorney in Kane County and in the private practice of law. He also served as the first Chair of the Illinois Human Rights Commission and served in that role for 18 years. Chief Judge Pallmeyer, then an ALJ for the Commission, recalls getting to know him in that in that role, which he carried out with thoughtful integrity.

Judge Barbosa was born in Mexico and at two months old migrated to the U.S. with his parents. He became a naturalized citizen at age six. His memoir, “The Littlest Wetback: From Undocumented Child to Federal Judge,” gave a glimpse into his compelling life story as the son of migrant farmworkers and his journey to the federal bench.

Our hearts and prayers are with Judge Barbosa’s family and loved ones. We will all miss his charm, his smile, and his dedication to doing justice for the large number of litigants who appeared before him.

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