

## **News from the Ninth - September 2024**

### **District of Alaska**

**Judge Gary Spraker** was recently appointed to three more years on the BAP.

### **District of Arizona**

On July 25, 2024, **Judge Madeleine Wanslee** will complete her term as Chair of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference. Madeleine has served on the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference for four years. The Ninth Circuit has greatly benefited from her work. Her Arizona colleagues are proud of her work and glad to have her representing Arizona.

### **Central District of California**

The Central District Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys' Association is honoring **Judge Julia Brand** as the Calvin Ashland Judge of the Year. The award will be presented at the annual Calvin Ashland Awards Dinner on November 14, 2024. Congratulations to Julie!

### **Eastern District of California**

Wayne Blackwelder, Clerk of Court for the Eastern District of California has given his notice. Wayne has served as Clerk of the Court for 14 years. His last day will be February 28, 2025.

### **Northern District of California**

**Judge Bill Lafferty** will be recognized with the 2024 Excellence in Education Award at NCBJ's 2024 Annual Conference. This award recognizes the extensive and thoughtful work in legal education Bill has been involved in throughout his time as a bankruptcy judge. In addition, Bill is the Education Chair for NCBJ's 2024 Annual Conference. Bill looks forward to an engaging, thematic program and encourages all to attend in Seattle.

At the conclusion of the 2024 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, **Judge Elaine Hammond** will become a member of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference Committee. She follows in the footsteps of Madeleine Wanslee, which will be big shoes to fill!

### **Southern District of California**

The Ninth Circuit conducted interviews for a new bankruptcy judge to be assigned to the Southern District of California, but the Circuit has identified the new judge yet. **Judge Chris Latham** looks forward to having a new colleague.

### **District of Idaho**

The Ninth Circuit has begun the process for selecting a new bankruptcy judge following Joe Meier's passing. The Circuit has begun the selection process. The application deadline is August 1, 2024. In the interim, **Judge Ben Hursh** (MT) has been helping the Idaho courts.

## **District of Nevada**

The District of Nevada's Clerk of Court, Mary Schott, recently announced that she plans to retire in mid-April 2025. Mary, a native Las Vegas, has been with the Court in a myriad of roles since March 1987, and has served as Clerk since the fall of 2007. The fall 2007 issue of our local bankruptcy newsletter, The Bankruptcy Bugle, is attached and contains a nice summary of Mary's career with the Court leading up to her selection as our Clerk of Court. The positive impact her knowledge, effective leadership, and the friendship she has developed with the Nevada bankruptcy judges and rest of our bankruptcy court family, can't be overstated, and will stand the test of time. The Judges and staff of the District of Nevada will miss her greatly.

In addition, on March 31, 2025, having served a 5-year term, **Judge August Landis** will be stepping down as Chief Judge of the Bankr. D. Nev. His successor, determined by seniority, will be **Judge Natalie M. Cox**. Judge Cox joined the bankruptcy bench in Nevada on January 27, 2020. Judge Cox will take the reins as the recruitment for Mary's successor begins in earnest. Augie notes she will do a great job as Chief.

## **District of Oregon**

On October 1, 2024, **Judge Tom Renn** will become the Chair of the Executive Committee for the Ninth Circuit Conference of Chief Bankruptcy Judges.

## **Eastern District of Washington**

**Judge Whitman Holt** (E.D. Wash.) and **Judge Dan Collins** (AZ) are working to obtain informal guidance from the AO on whether bankruptcy judges acting as mediators and settlement judges have judicial immunity. This issue will be part of the agenda at the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference Bankruptcy Judges Business Meeting in July. An ad hoc working group has been formed with Bankruptcy Judges Dan Collins (D. Az.), **Teresa Pearson** (D. Or.), and Whitman Holt (E.D. Wash.) leading the way.

## **Western District of Washington**

**Judge Brian Lynch** retired in May and **Judge Marc Barreca** is retiring at the end of July. Neither vacancy will be filled, so the Western District of Washington is reshuffling case assignments among the three remaining judges. The biggest change is that **Judge Tim Dore** will share cases filed in the Tacoma division with **Judge Mary Jo Heston** and he will conduct hearings at both the Seattle and Tacoma courthouses.

**Judge Mary Jo Heston** received the Turnaround Management Association Chair Award last October and was appointed the Chair of the Ninth Circuit's Bankruptcy Judges Education Committee through September 30, 2024. In addition, she was appointed to the International Insolvency Institute (which is like the American College of Bankruptcy but on an international basis). Judge Heston has also organized a monthly Chapter 11 lunch program where

experienced practitioners provide guidance and tips to other attorneys interested in wading into the Chapter 11 practice.

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts appointed our Clerk of Court, **Gina Zadra Walton**, to the Bankruptcy Clerk's Advisory Group for a term through December 31, 2026. **Tracy Bowers** was recently appointed as Chief Deputy of the Court (replacing Gina, who had filled that role for a decade).

**Judge Chris Alston** commenced duties as Chief on October 1, and was appointed to the Ninth Circuit's Opportunity and Equality Committee for a three-year term effective December 1, 2023.

You may have heard that Seattle is hosting the NCBJ Annual Meeting. We are working with **Judge Rob Faris** and the Clerk of the BAP Susan Spraul to mount an appellate skills program at the courthouse for 16 up and coming lawyers.

**No news is good news** for the Districts of Hawaii, Montana, and Oregon.

Report submitted by M. Elaine Hammond, NCBJ Governor for the Ninth Circuit