



United States Bankruptcy Court Northern District of California

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PRESS RELEASE

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Judge William J. Lafferty, III, appointed Chief Judge of the Northern District Bankruptcy Court

The Bankruptcy Judges of the Northern District of California are pleased to announce that Chief Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California has appointed Judge William J. Lafferty, III, of the court's Oakland Division, as Chief Judge, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 154(b). His appointment will be effective December 1, 2026.

Judge Lafferty was appointed to the bench on April 20, 2011. He was reappointed for a second 14-year term on April 20, 2025.

Judge Lafferty is an experienced judge with a national reputation for excellence. He served on the Federal Judicial Center's Bankruptcy Judges' Education Advisory Committee from 2016 to 2022. He also served for 10 years on the Bankruptcy Appellate Panel for the Ninth Circuit and served as Chief Judge of that court in 2024 and 2025. In 2024, he received the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges' Excellence in Education Award for his contributions to the field of bankruptcy education. An alumnus of the University of California Berkeley and U.C. Law San Francisco (formerly Hastings College of the Law), Judge Lafferty served as law clerk to the Bankruptcy Judge Thomas E. Carlson of this court. He was a partner in the storied San Francisco law firm of Howard, Rice, Nemerovski, Canady, Falk and Rabkin (later acquired by Arnold & Porter) prior to his appointment to the bench in 2011.

Throughout his career, Judge Lafferty served as an officer in numerous professional organizations, including as President of the Bay Area Bankruptcy Forum, Vice-President of the California Bankruptcy Forum, and as Chair of the Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Section of the Bar Association of San Francisco.

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of California reported more than 6,780 bankruptcy filings in fiscal year 2026. The court has five bankruptcy judges and four divisional offices serving 15 counties.

Judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit have statutory responsibility for selecting and appointing the 68 bankruptcy judges in the nine western states that comprise the Ninth Circuit. The court uses a comprehensive merit selection process for the initial appointment and for the reappointments of bankruptcy judges. Bankruptcy judges serve a 14-year, renewable term and handle all bankruptcy-related matters under the Bankruptcy Code.

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