

2025



ANNUAL REPORT

United States District Court
for the Northern Mariana Islands



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was collaboratively written and prepared by employees of the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

CREDITS

CHIEF JUDGE

Ramona V. Manglona

CLERK OF COURT & MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Heather L. Kennedy

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Francine Atalig
Amanda Hayes
Kimberly Tudela
Lola Guerrero
Michel Li
Michelle Moshkovoy
Justin Poon
Nicole Sablan
Yun-Da Tsai

DESIGN

Justin Poon

PHOTOGRAPHY

Francine Atalig
William Bezzant
Amanda Hayes
Justin Poon
Nicole Sablan

Bryan Manabat, *Marianas Variety*
NMI Judiciary
MC2 McCoy, U.S. Navy

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUDGE

Greetings, *Håfa Adai yan Tirow!*

It is my pleasure to share with you the 2025 Annual Report of the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands! Every annual report compiles some of the many events, big and small, that the Court carries out over the course of the year. In 2025, historic, momentous events for the Court not only highlighted the Court's critical role in providing access to justice and legal education to the community, but also the Court's historical experience and unique role within the overlapping legal systems that guarantee the rights and privileges of all those who reside within the NMI.

This year's District Conference held in partnership with the Pacific Judicial Council, which highlighted a visiting three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit—including Chief Circuit Judge Mary H. Murguia—hear oral arguments at the U.S. Courthouse in Gualo Rai. The last time the Ninth Circuit was in the NMI was over two decades ago, when the Ninth Circuit still had appellate jurisdiction over the cases from the NMI's local judicial system. The NMI government still regulated immigration policy, while the saga of the NMI's garment industry was reaching its denouement. Since then, the legal relationship between the NMI and the federal system, including the Court and the Ninth Circuit, has changed in significant

ways; but many of the core issues underlying the NMI's unique relationship with the United States remain the same.

I am also proud of the Court's activities in engaging the community and providing opportunities to learn about the Court's work and the rule of law. In addition to reading thoughtful essays submitted for the annual Ninth Circuit Civics Contest, I was privileged to visit students to discuss the fundamental principles underlying our system of government and laws and show the practical impact of legal decisions in day-to-day life. The Court also hosted its inaugural program for interns and visiting college students to meet the people and offices that make up the federal criminal justice system. Law enforcement officers and attorneys spoke about their wide-ranging experiences and pathways to their current roles. Furthermore, the Court this year welcomed 224 new citizens across ten naturalization ceremonies. I look forward to all the ways in which they will contribute to the great American experiment—and perhaps come back to Court to serve their community as jurors.

On a concluding note, the Court this year bade farewell to retiring longtime Chief Deputy Clerk William J. Bezzant and mourned the loss of former Chief Judge Alex R. Munson. Any attempt to summarize their contributions to the Court's work



and service to the community would be a gross understatement of all they have contributed so that the Court can meet the demands of tomorrow—and their bittersweet departures reaffirm how fortunate I am to have the competent, hard-working, and compassionate staff who make all of the Court's work possible.

May this annual report serve as a springboard for further reflections on the continuing mission of the Court and the relationship with the community it serves. I cannot wait to see what accomplishments will grace all of us here at the Court in the future.

Si Yu'us Ma'åse yan Ghilison,

A blue ink signature of Ramona V. Manglona, written in a cursive style.

Ramona V. Manglona
Chief Judge



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands is to serve the community by ensuring equal access to justice for all by providing an impartial forum to resolve disputes in a fair, effective, and timely manner pursuant to the rule of law.

About Us

The District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands was established by an act of Congress in 1977 and became operational in January 1978. It sits on the island of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands but may also sit at other places within the Commonwealth. The District Court has the same jurisdiction to hear federal cases as other United States district courts, including bankruptcy cases. Appeals are taken directly to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

The District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands is the smallest and youngest of the ninety-four district courts across the nation. It has one active district judge who employs three chambers staff, and ten Clerk's Office staff. The Clerk of Court also serves as the Magistrate Judge. The Office of Pretrial and Probation Services for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands has two employees stationed on Saipan. These hardworking court employees serve the community by ensuring all facets of court services run properly.

Citizens from the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota provide an invaluable service to the Court and the community each year by serving as jurors in civil and criminal trials and grand jury proceedings.



Meet The Judges



The Honorable **Ramona V. Manglona**, Chief Judge, was nominated by President Barack H. Obama on January 26, 2011, to serve as District Court Judge for the Northern Mariana Islands.

Judge Manglona's nomination was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on July 27, 2011. Two days later, President Barack H. Obama signed her commission, which was the official act of appointment of Judge Manglona to the District Court.

Judge Manglona assumed office as Chief Judge on July 30, 2011. She is the first person of Northern Marianas descent to serve as a federal judge.

Judge Manglona was nominated for a second ten-year term by President Joseph R. Biden and was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on April 16, 2024.



The Honorable **Heather L. Kennedy** became Clerk of Court on April 15, 2013. Chief Judge Manglona appointed Heather L. Kennedy to also serve as Magistrate Judge on June 11, 2013.

Judge Kennedy is the first Magistrate Judge for the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands and one of two Clerks of Court/Magistrate Judges currently serving in the federal court system.

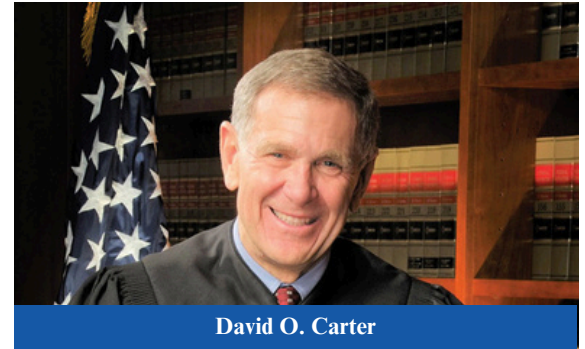
As a part-time U.S. Magistrate Judge, Judge Kennedy is appointed to serve four-year terms. Chief Judge Manglona appointed Judge Kennedy to her current fourth term on June 11, 2025, after an evaluation process that included public comments and review by a Merit Selection Panel.

Designated Judges

On occasion, federal judges from districts throughout the Ninth Circuit preside over certain matters in our District. The District Court is grateful to Chief Judge Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood (District of Guam), Judge David O. Carter (Central District of California), Chief Bankruptcy Judge Robert J. Faris (District of Hawaii Bankruptcy Court), Senior Judge James L. Robart (Western District of Washington), Magistrate Judge Wes Reber Porter (District of Hawaii), and Magistrate Judge Michael J. Bordallo (District of Guam) for their assistance.



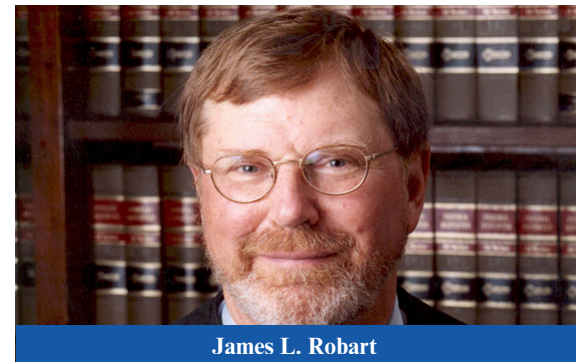
Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood



David O. Carter



Robert J. Faris



James L. Robart

Pursuant to 48 U.S.C. § 1821(b)(2), judges of courts of record of the Northern Mariana Islands may be assigned temporarily to serve in the District Court. The District Court thanks Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja, Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio and Associate Judge Lillian A. Tenorio of the Commonwealth Superior Court for their service to this Court as designated judges.



Wes Reber Porter



Michael J. Bordallo

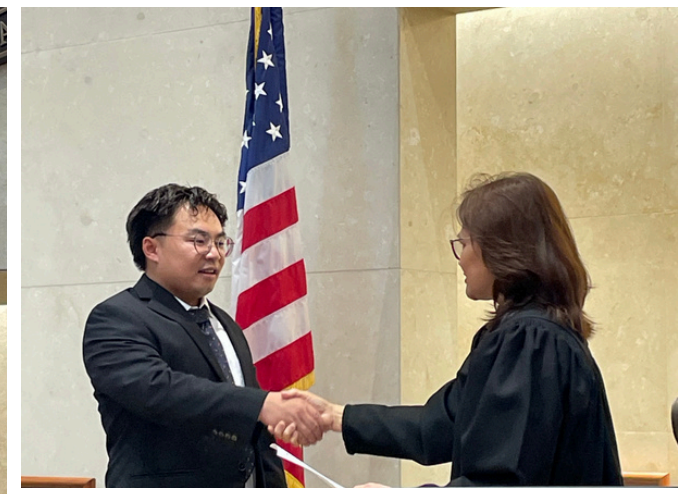


Roberto C. Naraja

Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio

Lillian A. Tenorio

Attorney Admissions



Attorney admission funds are primarily used to support educational programs and events for members of the District Court Bar, including the annual District Conference and other continuing legal education programs throughout the year. Other expenditures include civics programs for students, attorney costs associated with attorney disciplinary matters, and the Pacific Judicial Council.

In 2018, the District Court first implemented Local Rule 83.5, which established the Attorney Admission Biennial Renewal Fee of \$30.00. The renewal fee ensures funding for educational programs and provides the District Court with an updated, accurate listing of current bar members.

In 2025, the Court admitted five attorneys to the federal bar. As of December 31, 2025, the District Court Bar membership consists of 102 permanent and 49 temporary members.

	2023	2024	2025
Newly Admitted	9	14	5
Permanent Members	105	99	102
Temporary Members	36	49	49

Defender Services

OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER FOR THE DISTRICT OF GUAM AND THE NMI

Defender Services in this small district are unique. To ensure that CJA Panel members receive enough appointments to maintain proficiency in their federal criminal defense work and provide high-quality representation, the Court appoints CJA Counsel first and will appoint the FPDO when there is an insufficient number of CJA Panel Members or Associate Panel Members available or qualified to handle a case.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI) proudly celebrates its 31st anniversary this year. The office was first opened in 1994 on Guam as a branch of the Hawaii Federal Public Defender and became an independent office in 2001. In 2023, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals expanded the office to include the NMI. The office works collaboratively with the CJA panel and provides valuable resources, including manuals, guides, CLE credits, etc. The office has 3 lawyers, who handle federal criminal offenses in Guam and the NMI, including drug trafficking, fraud, firearms, immigration, theft and other federal offenses. Assistant Federal Public Defender (AFPD) Nicole Breazeale, whose experience includes public service and private practice in Guam and Oregon, joined the office in 2024. Senior Litigator Briana Kottke, whose background includes public

service and private practice in Montana and Washington, D.C., joined the office in 2019. Federal Public Defender Leilani Lujan, whose experience includes public service and private practice in Guam and Hawaii, joined the office in 2013 and was appointed in 2023 as the Defender. Both AFPD Breazeale and Senior Litigator Kottke have proudly defended clients in the NMI. An amazing administrative staff bolsters our operations: Administrative Officer Renate Grimes, Computer System Administrator Chris Mantanona, Administrative Assistant Emmajean Lamb and Case Management Assistant Kasteen Arceo. Together, we zealously uphold the Sixth Amendment right to counsel and fight for a fair and just criminal justice system in our islands. Biba Marianas!



Top L-R: Nicole Cruz Breazeale, Assistant Federal Public Defender; Leilani Lujan, Federal Public Defender; Briana Kottke, Senior Litigator; Renate Grimes, Administrative Officer.

Bottom L-R: Emmajean Lamb, Administrative Assistant; Chris Mantanona, Computer System Administrator; Kasteen Arceo, Case Management Assistant.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT RESOURCE COUNSEL



Bruce L. Berline is the District Court's Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Representative and Resource Counsel. In districts that do not have an on-site federal public defender, such as the Northern Mariana Islands, the district court appoints a Resource Counsel to provide support and guidance to the CJA panel members and to liaise with the Defender Services Office in Washington, D.C. and other CJA panel representatives throughout the nation. Mr. Berline is also the Chairperson of the CJA Panel Committee. He, along with Robert T. Torres and David G. Banes, assist the District Court in ensuring the CJA panel consists of knowledgeable and well-trained attorneys capable of upholding the guarantees of the Sixth Amendment by providing competent counsel to indigent individuals charged with crimes. Mr. Berline has served the Court as CJA Representative and Resource Counsel since 2015. He has been a member of the CJA panel since 1999 and practiced in the CNMI for over 25 years, focusing on criminal defense, admiralty, and personal injury litigation.

NINTH CIRCUIT LAWYER REPRESENTATIVE



In July 2025, Nicole M. Torres-Ripple concluded her two-year term as the Ninth Circuit Lawyer Representative for the District Court. She was succeeded by Richard C. Miller. The Lawyer Representative plays a vital role in the administration of justice across the Ninth Circuit's 15 districts, including assisting with the planning and execution of the annual Circuit Conference.

Richard C. Miller is Senior Counsel at Banes Horey Nie & Miller LLC. He graduated from the University of Colorado School of Law in 2005 and began his legal career with the Colorado Public Defender's Office. In 2007, he relocated to Saipan to join the NMI Public Defender's Office. From 2011 to 2019, Mr. Miller served as a law clerk to Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona. He is a member of the District Court's Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Panel and concentrates his practice in criminal law, immigration law, and family law.

Before entering the legal profession, Mr. Miller taught Russian at the University of California, Berkeley, and worked as a book editor at Yale University Press. He is also an active member of the community and performs as a bassoonist with the Saipan Pacific Winds Concert Band.

Joint District Conference & Oral Arguments



Chief Judge Murguia addressed attendees at the District Court courtroom.

On September 24, 2025, judicial officers, court staff, and legal professionals from American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, the national and state courts of the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands, joined by presenters from the continental United States and students from several Saipan high schools, convened at the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands to kick off the three-day district conference held in partnership with the Pacific Judicial Council.

The conference opened with oral arguments before a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of

Appeals for the Ninth Circuit—the first such sitting since 2002. Chief Circuit Judge Mary H. Murguia, Circuit Judge Johnnie B. Rawlinson, and Senior Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown heard oral arguments in three criminal appeals: two cases from the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands and one case from the District Court of Guam. The two NMI cases concerned judgments on charges of conspiring to transport and aiding and abetting the transportation of an illegal alien. The Guam case concerned a sentence imposed upon revocation of supervised release. Following oral arguments, the three circuit judges fielded ques-

tions from attendees, sharing personal stories about their journeys to the bench and imparting advice to aspiring legal professionals.

The conference then continued with Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, U.S. District Court for the NMI, welcoming attendees and presenters, followed by Chief Circuit Judge Murguia's keynote address on the State of the Ninth Circuit—another historic moment, as the last official appearance in the Northern Marianas by a sitting Ninth Circuit chief circuit judge was in 2004, when Chief Circuit Judge Mary M. Schroeder presided over a ceremony marking the termina-

tion of the Ninth Circuit's jurisdiction to hear appeals from the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of the NMI. Chief Judge Murguia's remarks touched upon continuing challenges to the administration of justice in the United States, the importance of wider community engagement with the work of the judiciary, and the longstanding collaborative relationship between the Ninth Circuit and the judiciaries of the island nations and territories making up the membership of the PJC.

Attendees then heard updates on the State of the NMI Bar from Gretchen A. Smith, Esq., NMI

Bar Association Secretary, followed by the State of the NMI Criminal Justice Act Plan from Bruce L. Berline, Esq., Criminal Justice Act Panel Attorney District Representative.

The final item on the morning agenda was the presentation of the Hon. Alex R. Munson Professionalism Award, which honors attorneys who exemplify integrity, competence, civility, and a deep commitment to the rule of law. Chief Judge Manglona presented the award to Steven P. Pixley, Esq., in recognition of his professionalism, courtesy, and outstanding contributions to the NMI

legal community during his over thirty years of legal practice.

Attendees then moved to the Crowne Plaza Resort to continue the remainder of the conference's events. Chief Justice Robert J. Torres, Jr., Supreme Court of Guam and PJC President, gave welcome remarks. Presentations for the rest of the conference addressed trends and challenges posed by artificial intelligence, constitutional and statutory interpretation, the diversity in legal and cultural frameworks across the PJC member jurisdictions, the role of jurisdictions in developing local law and accounting for



Senior Judge McKeown, Chief Judge Murguia and Judge Rawlinson answer students' question during Q&A session..



Chief Judge Murguia delivers her State of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Address.



Attorney Pixley receives the Hon. Alex R. Munson Professionalism Award from Chief Judge Manglona.

local traditions and values, and judicial ethics. Attendees engaged thoughtfully with the presentation materials, sharing their thoughts and asking questions about the applicability of the content to their own jurisdictions.

The conference concluded on September 26, 2025, with reports from the PJC member delegations on the state of their respective judiciaries and a meeting of the PJC Executive Committee.

When not attending the conference, the off-island guests were provided tours around the island of Saipan, and some were even able to fly to the neighboring island of Tinian or take a short boat ride to the island of Mañagaha located within Saipan's lagoon.



Chief Judge Murguia and Sr. Judge McKeown enjoy the sunset dinner at Surf Club Saipan.



District Judge Laplante and 6th Circuit Chief Judge Sutton don Chamorro mwarmwars.



CNMI Supreme Court Justice Manglona and Chief Judge Murguia speak at the panel on Judicial Conduct and Judicial Disability, moderated by law clerk Michel Li.



L-R: Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Circuit Judge Johnnie B. Rawlinson, Senior Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown, Chief Circuit Judge Mary H. Murguia, Chief Judge Manglona, and Chief Judge Tydingco-Gatewood posed for a photo.

“The presence of the Ninth Circuit judges reaffirmed the Ninth Circuit’s deep connection to the Pacific region and our shared commitment to the rule of law. We were also fortunate to have members of the Pacific Judicial Council participate, including its President, Chief Justice Robert J. Torres, Jr., of the Guam Supreme Court. We further appreciate the presence and presentations of U.S. Sixth Circuit Chief Judge Jeffrey S. Sutton and District Court Judge Joseph Laplante from the District of New Hampshire at the conference.”

Chief Judge Manglona



Senior Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown, Chief Circuit Judge Mary H. Murguia, and Circuit Judge Johnnie B. Rawlinson are flanked by NMI high school students at the United States Courthouse after an engaging Q&A session.



Prof. Erwin Chemerinsky, Dean of the UC Berkeley School of Law, presented remotely to the conference attendees at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



In Memoriam: Senior Judge Alex R. Munson

September 25, 1941 – December 5, 2025

“Judge Alex Munson’s judicial service to the people of the Marianas and all of Micronesia spanned over four decades. He was always respectful to the people before him, as well as those who worked with him. After taking senior status in 2010, he was always willing to come back to the islands to render his assistance. Our sincerest thank you, olomwaay, and si Yu’us ma’ase to Judge Munson for serving the Court and our community with compassion and distinction.”

Chief Judge Manglona

The Court mourns the passing of Senior Judge Alex R. Munson, whose distinguished service to the judiciary and to the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands leaves an enduring legacy. Judge Munson died on December 5, 2025, at the age of 84.

Judge Munson devoted over four decades of his professional life to the administration of justice throughout the Northern Mariana Islands and the broader Pacific region. Born in South Gate, California, he earned degrees in Education before completing his law degree and beginning his legal career. In 1982, he was appointed Chief Justice of the High Court of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, where he presided over numerous appeals and authored opinions affecting the diverse island communities of the Trust Territory.

In 1988, Judge Munson was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the second Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, succeeding the Honorable Alfred Laureta. He was re-confirmed for a second term in 1998 and served as Chief Judge until taking senior status in 2010. Throughout his tenure, he guided the Court through its transformation into a fully functioning modern federal district court and helped shape its early jurisprudence and institutional development.

Judge Munson’s judicial service also extended across the Pacific, including as a designated judge of the U.S. District Court of Guam and as an associate justice in Palau and American Samoa. He was an active participant in Pacific Judicial Conferences and a steadfast ad-

vocate for the NMI legal community, earning the deep respect of litigants, colleagues, and court personnel alike.

Throughout his career and into his retirement years, Judge Munson’s commitment to fairness, thoughtful legal reasoning, and respect for the rule of law was universally acknowledged. His integrity, humility, and mentorship have left a lasting impact on the Court and the broader judicial community across the region.

The Court extends its sincere condolences to Judge Munson’s family, friends, and all who had the privilege of working with him. His service and legacy will be long remembered.



Essay Contest Winners:

1st Place - Jia Ross Nicdao, Marianas High School

2nd Place - Julia Taitano, Marianas High School

3rd Place - Jessica Kim, Saipan International School

Video Contest Winners:

1st Place - Saipan International School team of Dong Hyun Lee, Dong Gyu Lee and Jiho Kong

2nd Place - Misha Kim, Saipan International School

3rd Place - Marianas High School team of Kenny Zhang, Maria Zheng and Jie Yi Zheng



YOUTUBE.COM

2025 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest Distr

On May 5, 2025, the United States District Co



Jia Ross Nicdao of Marianas High School placed first at the district level and, for the second time, ranked among the top 12 at the Ninth Circuit level.

Ninth Circuit Civics Contest

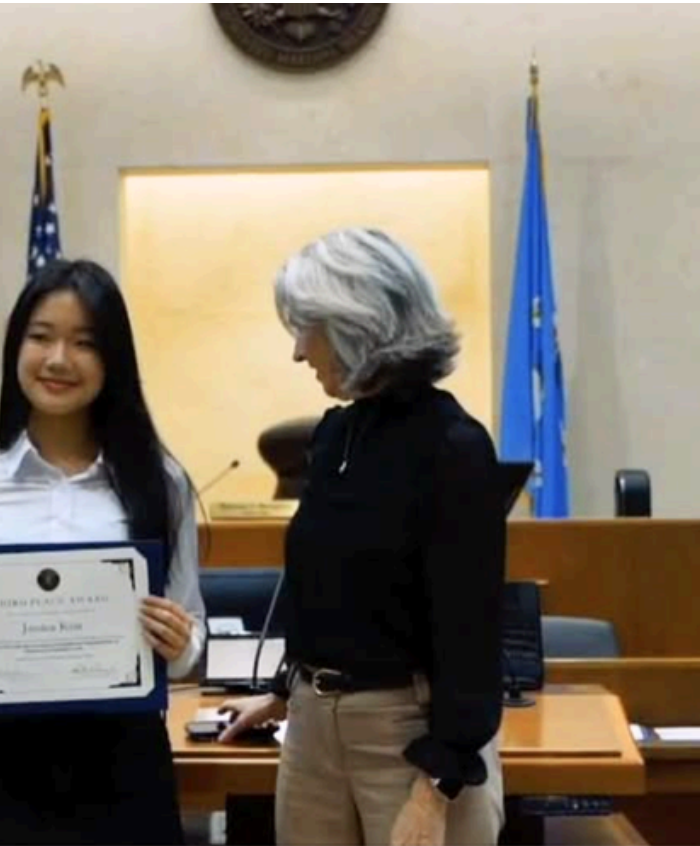
The Ninth Circuit Civics Contest is an essay and video contest held annually for high school students in the circuit. The 2025 theme was “*When Duty Calls: Why Exercising the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship is Important to Me.*” Students were challenged to explore what it means to be a U.S. citizen, to reflect on the rights and responsibilities that citizenship entails, and to share how those principles impact their lives and communities.

Across 15 judicial districts, students submitted 885 essays and 126 videos. From that pool, 12 essays and 12 videos were selected for final consideration—a prestigious recognition of academic excellence, civic awareness, and personal insight.

Students throughout the NMI submitted a total of 14 essays and four videos.

We are proud to share that Jia Ross Nicdao, a senior at Marianas High School, was among the top 12 finalists in the essay category. This marks her second time earning this distinction, having first been recognized as a top 12 finalist in 2023. Her thoughtful submission exemplified a deep understanding of civic responsibility and the vital role every individual plays in shaping a democratic society.

Jia’s achievement reflects the continued dedication of our students and educators in promoting civic education and engagement throughout the Northern Mariana Islands. We extend our congratulations to Jia and thank all the students who participated for contributing their voices to this important conversation.





Fifth Annual Read Aloud with the Judges

In celebration of Law Week, Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy participated in the Court's Fifth Annual Read Aloud with the Judges event in partnership with the Joeten Kiyu Public Library in 2025. The annual outreach program continues to strengthen the Court's connection with the community while promoting literacy and civic awareness among young readers.

During the event, Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy read children's books selected to encourage curiosity, responsibility, and thoughtful reflection. Following the readings, the judges engaged students in an interactive question-and-answer session, during which children asked

about the judges' experiences in the courtroom and their paths to careers in law. The judges shared personal stories that emphasized the importance of justice, integrity, and public service.

The event concluded with each child receiving a gavel-shaped pencil, a small reminder of the day's lessons and an encouragement to continue exploring both reading and civic learning. As in prior years, the judges left the library inspired by the students' enthusiasm and engagement.

Now in its fifth year, Read Aloud with the Judges remains one of the Court's most meaningful outreach efforts and a highlight of Law Week. The program reflects the Court's

ongoing commitment to fostering early literacy, civic understanding, and positive relationships with the community it serves.



Fifth Annual Law Day Photo Contest

In May 2025, the Court hosted its Fifth Annual Law Day Photo Contest, continuing an outreach initiative that encourages students to reflect creatively on the principles of law, justice, and civic responsibility. This year's contest centered on the Law Day theme, "The Constitution's Promise: Out of Many, One," inviting students to capture images that reflect unity, shared values, and the enduring strength of the Constitution.

This year's contest featured a unique approach to recognizing student achievement. Rather than hosting the award presentation at the courthouse, the Court brought the celebration directly to the students. Chief Judge Manglona visited the winning student's school and classroom, where the visit began with a civics outreach presentation focused on the Constitution, the rule of law, and the role of the courts.

Following the presentation, Chief Judge Manglona surprised the student by presenting the Law Day Photo Contest award in front of classmates and teachers. The in-class recognition created a memorable moment and allowed fellow students to share in the celebration, reinforcing the connection between civic education and creative expression.



The Fifth Annual Law Day Photo Contest reflects the Court's continued commitment to innovative civic education and community outreach. The Court congratulates this year's winners,

and thanks participating schools and educators for their support.





2025 Keynote Speakers

- 01** Leanne Leigh, *USCIS District Director, Seattle District Office*
- 02** Dr. Chas Algaier, *Marianas High School Instructor*
- 03** Congresswoman Kimberlyn King-Hinds, *U.S. House of Representatives*
- 04** James Kennedy Weilbacher DLG. Benjamin, *Family Readiness Support Assistant, Department of the Army - 9th Mission Support Command*
- 05** Dr. Lawrence Camacho, *CNMI Commissioner of Education*
- 06** Zeno Camacho Deleon Guerrero, Jr., *Mount Carmel School, Vice Principal & AP U.S. Government Teacher*
- 07** Rear Admiral Brett M. Mietus, *Commander, Joint Region Marianas*

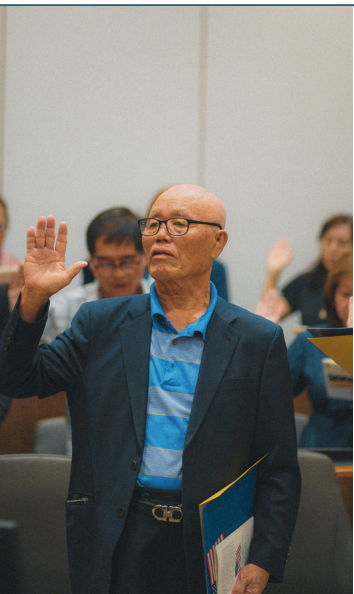


Naturalization Ceremonies

Naturalization ceremonies mark the final step in the journey to becoming a U.S. citizen. This joyous event marks the culmination of a journey through legal processes and personal dedication, as individuals take an oath of allegiance to the United States of America. It is a moment filled with pride and joy for new citizens, their families, and their communities, symbolizing a fresh start and a deeper connection to the nation's heritage and future.

In 2025, the District Court held ten naturalization ceremonies and swore in 224 individuals from thirteen countries as new citizens. They came from Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia, Nepal, New Zealand, Palau, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand.







Courthouse Tours

Courthouse tours are not just about visiting a building; they are about understanding the vital role that the judicial system plays in society. With a mix of history, technology, and community engagement, these tours aim to foster a deeper appreciation for the law and its impact on our lives.

The Federal Court will continue to provide visitors, students, and community members with courthouse tours in the future. For more information, visit the District Court's website at:

https://www.nmid.uscourts.gov/forms/tour_request.pdf.



Throughout 2025, the Court organized numerous court tours for local schools and community groups as part of its ongoing commitment to civic education and public outreach. These tours were designed to increase public understanding of the federal court system and to provide meaningful insight into the administration of justice.

During each tour, participants had the opportunity to meet, engage, and interact with judges, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, U.S. Probation Officers, and U.S. Marshals. Court personnel explained their respective roles and responsibilities within the judicial process, offering visitors a comprehensive view of how

cases move through the federal court system and how the various components of the judiciary work together.

The tours also included guided visits to courtrooms and offices, allowing participants to observe the physical spaces where judicial work take place. Through open dialogue and question-and-answer sessions, visitors were encouraged to ask questions and explore topics related to the rule of law, public service, and civic responsibility.

The Court's court tour program continues to serve as an important outreach initiative, fostering transparency, trust, and community engagement. By

welcoming schools and community groups into the courthouse, the Court promotes a greater appreciation for the role of the judiciary and strengthens its connection with the public it serves.



A student from Agape Christian School poses with a ballistic shield alongside Supervisory Deputy U.S. Marshal Shane Wilhite.



Marianas High School, with the largest group at eighty-eight students, visited the Courthouse on January 8, 2025.

Federal Criminal Justice System Overview

The District Court welcomed interns across the CNMI for its inaugural Federal Criminal Justice System Overview program on July 15, 2025.

The interns ranged from local high school students to visiting university students from New York and California. The program featured six sections and began in the morning with a courtroom conversation led by Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy, who discussed pathways to the federal judiciary.

Following this session, U.S. Probation Officers Gregory Arriola and Ricardo Leon Guerrero spoke about the procedures and importance of the U.S. Probation Office as the “eyes and ears” of the court.



After the probation officers’ presentation, Robert “Shane” Wilhite provided an overview of the role of the U.S. Marshals Service as the enforcement arm of the federal courts.



“It was interesting to hear first-hand anecdotes from seasoned professionals across the criminal justice system, particularly in Saipan and Guam,” said District Court student intern Michelle Moshkovoy, who is from San Francisco. “I really enjoyed meeting the different interns across the island as well.”

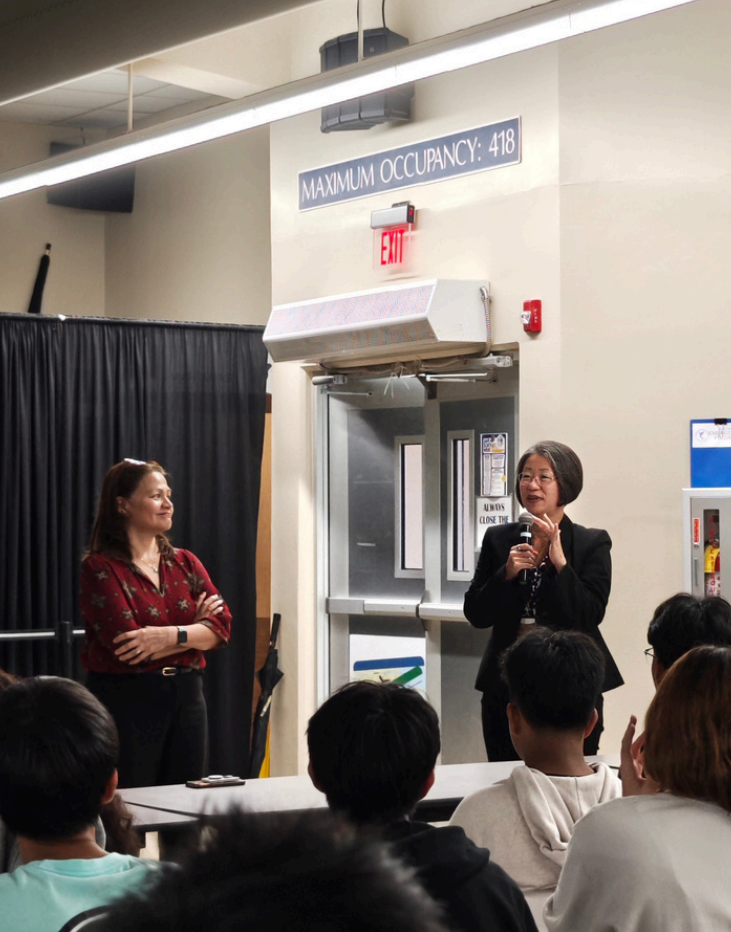


Next, attorney Robert T. Torres, a Criminal Justice Act representative, spoke to the interns, emphasizing the value of legal representation for those who are financially unable to afford an attorney in federal criminal cases.

Shawn Anderson, U.S. Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, then detailed the responsibilities of the federal government’s principal litigator. Finally, Leilani Lujan of the Office of the Federal Public Defender joined the courtroom via video from Guam and highlighted her role within the criminal justice system.

“The criminal justice system is really elaborate, and it takes a village to make it the whole that it is,” Moshkovoy said. “The Federal Criminal Justice System Overview program was a great way of seeing each of those parts in action.”





Judge Kim-Tenorio of the NMI Superior Court joins Chief Judge Manglona in speaking to students at Marianas High School.

Red Ribbon Campaign



In 2025, the District Court continued its participation in the annual Red Ribbon Campaign, reaffirming its commitment to promoting drug-free communities through education and outreach. This year's theme, "Life is a Puzzle, Solve it Drug Free," encouraged students to make thoughtful, healthy choices and recognize their role in building a safe and resilient community.

As part of this initiative, the Court organized interactive presentations at several local schools, including Marianas High School, Garapan Elementary School, Da'ok Academy, Saipan Southern High School, and Dandan Middle School. These presentations engaged students in thought-provoking discussions about the impact of substance abuse and the importance of living drug-free lives.

Each school visit featured an inspirational speaker, including Sharee Joyner, Eugene Wong, Lee Reyes, Sidney Kani, and Rainier Deleon Guerrero. Drawing from their personal experiences, the speakers shared candid accounts of their past struggles with substance abuse, their encounters with the court system, and their journeys toward recovery. Their messages encouraged students to make positive life choices and to stay away from drugs.

A highlight of this year's outreach was the participation of CNMI Customs and Biosecurity officers, who conducted live K-9 demonstrations showcasing how trained dogs detect illegal substances. The demonstrations provided students with a unique, real-world perspective on law enforcement efforts and reinforced the campaign's message in an



engaging and memorable way.

In addition to school outreach, the Court hosted its annual Red Ribbon Gate/Wall Decorating Contest, inviting schools to creatively express the campaign's message. Winners were selected based on creativity and the impact of their presentations. Kagman High School earned first place, followed by Golden Harvest International School and Day-care in second place—its third consecutive year receiving this recognition—and Francisco M. Sablan Middle School in third place.

The Court commends all schools that participated, speakers, and partner agencies for their continued support of the Red Ribbon Campaign. Through these efforts, the Court

remains dedicated to fostering awareness, encouraging positive decision making, and supporting a drug-free future for the children and the community.



First place winner, Kagman High School, gathered with Chief Judge Manglona, Magistrate Judge Kennedy and U.S. Probation Officer Arriola for a photo after receiving their trophy and cash award.



Second place winner, Golden Harvest International School & Daycare, gathered with Chief Judge Manglona, Magistrate Judge Kennedy and U.S. Probation Officer Arriola for a photo.



Third place winner, Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, gathered with Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy for a photo.



“During my time interning at the District Court, I was able to sit in on meetings, hearings, conferences, settlements, and other events inside the courtroom, while also learning much about the behind-the-scenes processes and court operations. I was tasked with assisting and reviewing their electronic Legacy Project, in which I was able to become familiar with the online court system and other critical software. Not only was this experience extremely educational and beneficial towards my career, but also provided a model example of an office workspace; the staff and interns I worked alongside created an extremely friendly and open environment that I now search for in every professional setting I enter.”

Lola Guerrero,
Student Intern



Hannah Robertson, Law Clerk, ended her two-year term with the District Court in September 2025.



Yun-Da Tsai, Law Clerk, started working with the District Court in September 2025. Yun-Da was sworn in virtually by Chief Judge Manglona in April 2025 before his arrival to Saipan.

Staffing Updates

In 2025, the Court welcomed several new members to its team through externships, clerkships, and internship programs, reflecting its continued commitment to professional development and community engagement.

Extern Zichen Liao served with the Court from April 2025 through July 2025, gaining valuable experience and insight into the federal judiciary. The Court also welcomed Yun-Da Tsai as a new law clerk, succeeding Hannah Robertson upon the completion of her two-year term. The Court extends its appreciation to Hannah for her dedicated service and contributions during her tenure.

The Court hosted student intern Lola Guerrero, who served from June 2025 through August, 2025, and student intern Michelle Moshkovoy, who served from June 2025 through August 2025. In addition, Aeyanna Maratita was sworn in as a Federal Judiciary Model Intern Program (MIP) intern on May 28, 2025, and will serve a one-year term. These internship opportunities provide students with valuable exposure to court operations and the administration of justice, while fostering interest in careers in the legal field.

The Court also recognizes a significant transition in leadership within the Clerk's Office. Chief Deputy Clerk William "Bill" Bezzant retired in December 2025 after 32 years of dedicated service to the Court. A full tribute to his career and contributions is featured on the following page. Beginning in 2026, Amanda Hayes, Chief Judge Manglona's Judicial Assistant, will transition into the role of Chief Deputy Clerk, continuing the Court's tradition of strong leadership and service.



Zichen Liao, Extern, received a Certificate of Appreciation from Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.

"As an intern for the U.S. District Court, I was mainly tasked with creating a brochure to help Chamorro locals navigate the process of filing for personal bankruptcy. Throughout the experience, I felt incredibly supported by the team — while learning not only about the legal process, but also the unique geopolitical context of Saipan. I'm so grateful for the knowledge gained during my internship."

Michelle Moshkovoy,
Student Intern



William J. Bezzant

Celebrating a Distinguished Career

After 32 years of dedicated service, William J. Bezzant, better known as Bill, retired as Chief Deputy Clerk for the District Court of the Northern Mariana Islands in December 2025. Since beginning his career with the Court on July 26, 1993, Bill has played an integral role in the administration and advancement of the Court's operations.

Throughout his tenure, Bill made lasting contributions that have shaped the Court's growth and development.

Among his most notable achievements was his involvement in the construction of the Courthouse in Gualo Rai, a milestone project that stands as a lasting testament to his commitment and vision. His leadership, institutional knowledge, and steady guidance were invaluable to the Clerk's Office and the Court as a whole.

Known for his professionalism, dedication, and strong work ethic, Bill earned the respect and appreciation of colleagues, members of the

bar, and the broader community. His decades of service reflect a deep commitment to the judiciary and to public service.

As he enters retirement, Bill looks forward to an exciting new endeavor—launching a YouTube channel dedicated to tracking storms in the South Pacific. While he will certainly be missed at the courthouse, the Court extends its sincere gratitude for his many years of service and wishes him all the best in this next chapter.



“I am so proud of our staff at the District Court in Saipan. Each of the original staff when I was hired in 1993 have since retired, leaving only me and a bunch of new faces over the years. Each of you has stepped-up to learn and develop the services and systems we provide today, which are light years advanced from 32 years ago. As I retire I am overjoyed to see how all our staff work together to solve problems and meet demands such that I have become suitably redundant, comfortable in deciding to retire. I wish you all continued success and harmony.”

William J. Bezzant
Chief Deputy Clerk (Ret.)



U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Office



Historical Commemorations

This year marked a significant milestone in the history of the federal judiciary. On March 4, 2025, the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office proudly celebrated the centennial of the Federal Probation Act of 1925.

To honor this 100-year legacy of service, staff were invited to participate in a formal re-admission of the Oath of Office. This ceremony served as a powerful symbolic gesture, reaffirming each officer's dedication to the court, the mission of the department, and the safety of the community.

Staff Transitions and Retirements

In 2025, the Probation and Pretrial Services Office navigated a period of significant transition, marked by the departure of several long-tenured colleagues.

U.S. Probation Officer Juanette David-Atalig, who began her career in 2015 as a Probation Officer Assistant and was promoted to Probation Officer in 2019, transferred to the District of Arizona after nearly a decade of dedicated service. Her work focused on pretrial supervision as well as pretrial and presentence investigations.

In May 2025, Chief Probation Officer Kim Walmsley retired

after 20 years of distinguished service to the U.S. Courts. Her career included service as a law clerk to the Honorable Frances Tydingco-Gatewood, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court of Guam, followed by years of leadership within the Probation Office.

The office also bid farewell to Supervisory U.S. Probation Officer John W. San Nicolas, who retired on December 31, 2025, after 24 years of service. He was widely recognized for his expertise in safety and firearms programs, location monitoring, and community outreach.



Officer David-Atalig and her family pose for a photo at the U.S. District Court in Arizona on her first day at work.



Chief Kim Walmsley's last day in the office.



Chief Judge Manglona presents a Certificate of Appreciation to Supervisory Officer John San Nicolas on his last visit to the NMI Office.

Leadership Advancements

In 2025, the Probation and Pretrial Services Office announced key leadership promotions. Grace D. Flores was appointed Chief U.S. Probation Officer. With 28 years of service, she has held nearly every role within the office, including becoming the district first Deputy Chief in 2009. Her extensive experience spans treatment services, operational management, and

support of the Drug Offender Re-Entry (DORE) Program, making her well positioned to lead the office.

Trina Duenas was promoted to Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer. She joined the federal Probation Office in 2014 following eight years with the Superior Court of Guam. Deputy Chief Duenas brings significant experience in supervi-

sing pretrial defendants and overseeing the district Safety Program, and has demonstrated strong leadership in advancing public safety and supporting offender rehabilitation.

The Court congratulates Chief Flores and Deputy Chief Duenas on their well-deserved promotions and looks forward to their continued leadership and service.



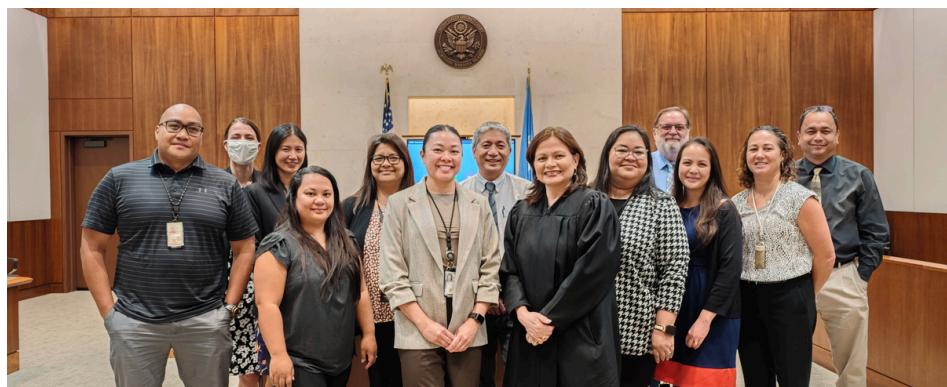
Chief Flores poses with her family, Chief Judge Manglona, and NMI District Court and Probation staff.



Deputy Chief Duenas poses with Officer Arriola and Chief Judge Manglona following her swearing-in.

New Appointments and Professional Development

On January 27, 2025, the office welcomed U.S. Probation Officer Emorie N. Martinez. Bringing a decade of experience from the Superior Court of Guam and her ongoing service in the U.S. Air Force Reserves, Officer Martinez is a valuable addition to the team.



NMI Probation and District Court staff pose along with Chief Judge Manglona and Officer Martinez for a photo following her swearing-in ceremony.

Following their appointments, Officers Martinez, Roquel Cendaña, and Vincent Reyes successfully completed the four-week Initial Probation Pretrial Training (IPPT) at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Charleston, South Carolina. Notably, Officer Reyes earned the Director's Leadership Award, as voted by his peers, and the Officer Safety Award.

Chief Grace Flores had the opportunity to participate in the Testimony Skills Lab for IPPT 2515 and 2516. In doing so, she was able to attend Officer Martinez's graduation ceremony in person!



USPO Vincent Reyes



USPO Roquel Cendaña



USPO Emorie Martinez



L-R: USPO Emorie Martinez, PPSO Deputy Chief Charles Robinson, and Chief Grace D. Flores.

Training Initiatives

In October 2025, the office implemented Stress First Aid (SFA) training, facilitated by Deputy Chief Duenas. This initiative was designed to provide staff with practical tools to identify and mitigate stress,

fostering a culture of peer support over “silent struggling.”

Post-training evaluations indicated a significant increase in stress awareness and a greater willingness among staff to inter-

vene and support colleagues. The program successfully empowered the team to navigate the high-pressure environment inherent to probation and pretrial services.

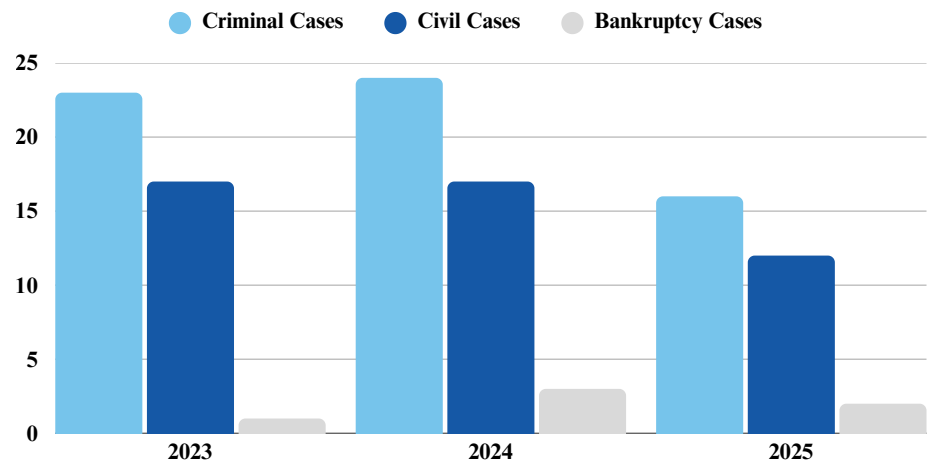
Operational Excellence

Special recognition is due to U.S. Probation staff of the NMI Office. Despite operating under-strength with the departure of Officer David-Atalig, their exceptional management of the

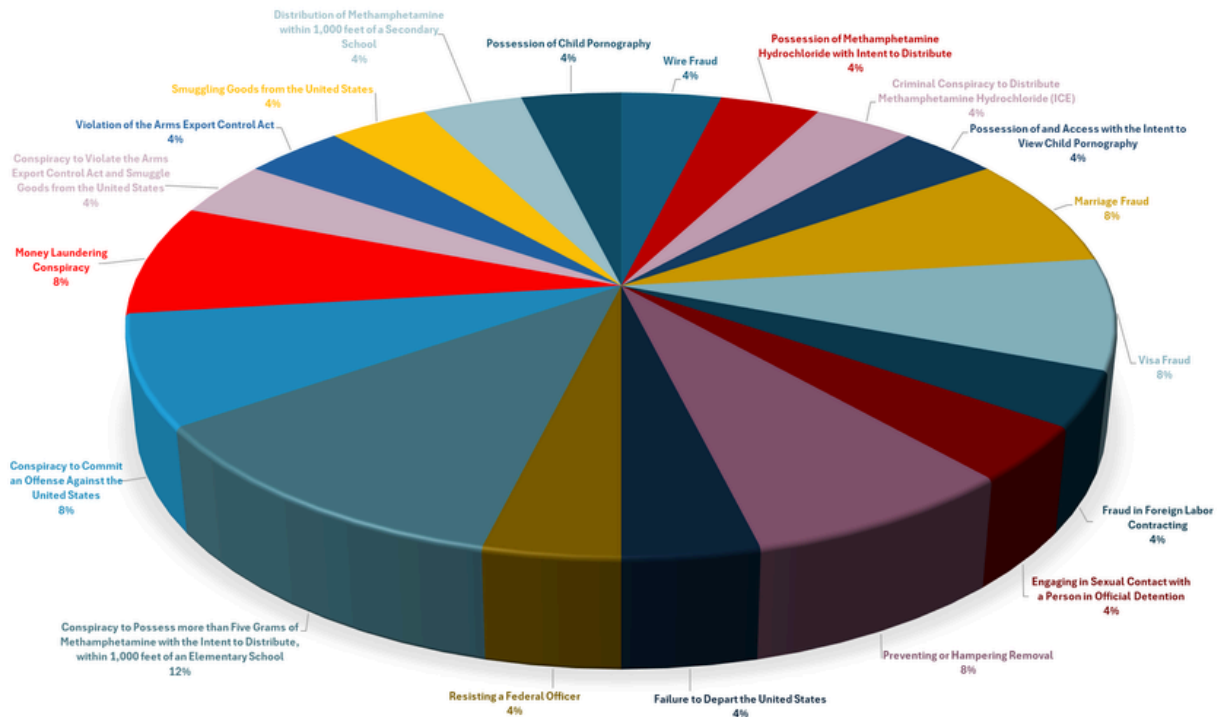
NMI office ensured that all organizational goals were met. While Guam-based staff provided intermittent support, the continued success of the NMI office is a direct result of

their commitment and the support of Chief Judge Manglona, Magistrate Judge Kennedy and NMI District Court staff.

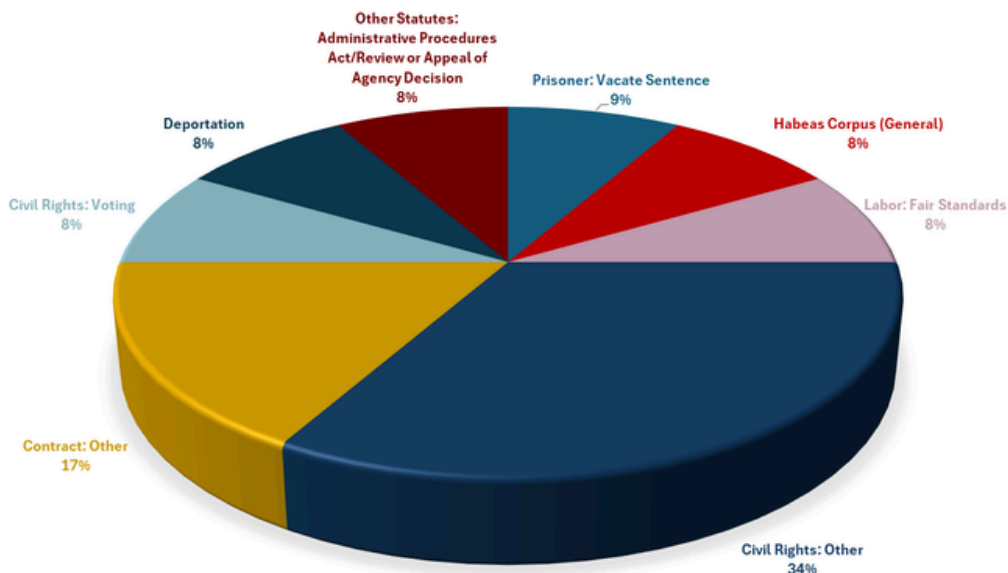
Case Statistics



2025 Criminal Cases - Nature of Suit



2025 Civil Cases - Nature of Suit





**United States District Court
for the Northern Mariana Islands**
1671 Gualo Rai Road
Saipan, MP 96950

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