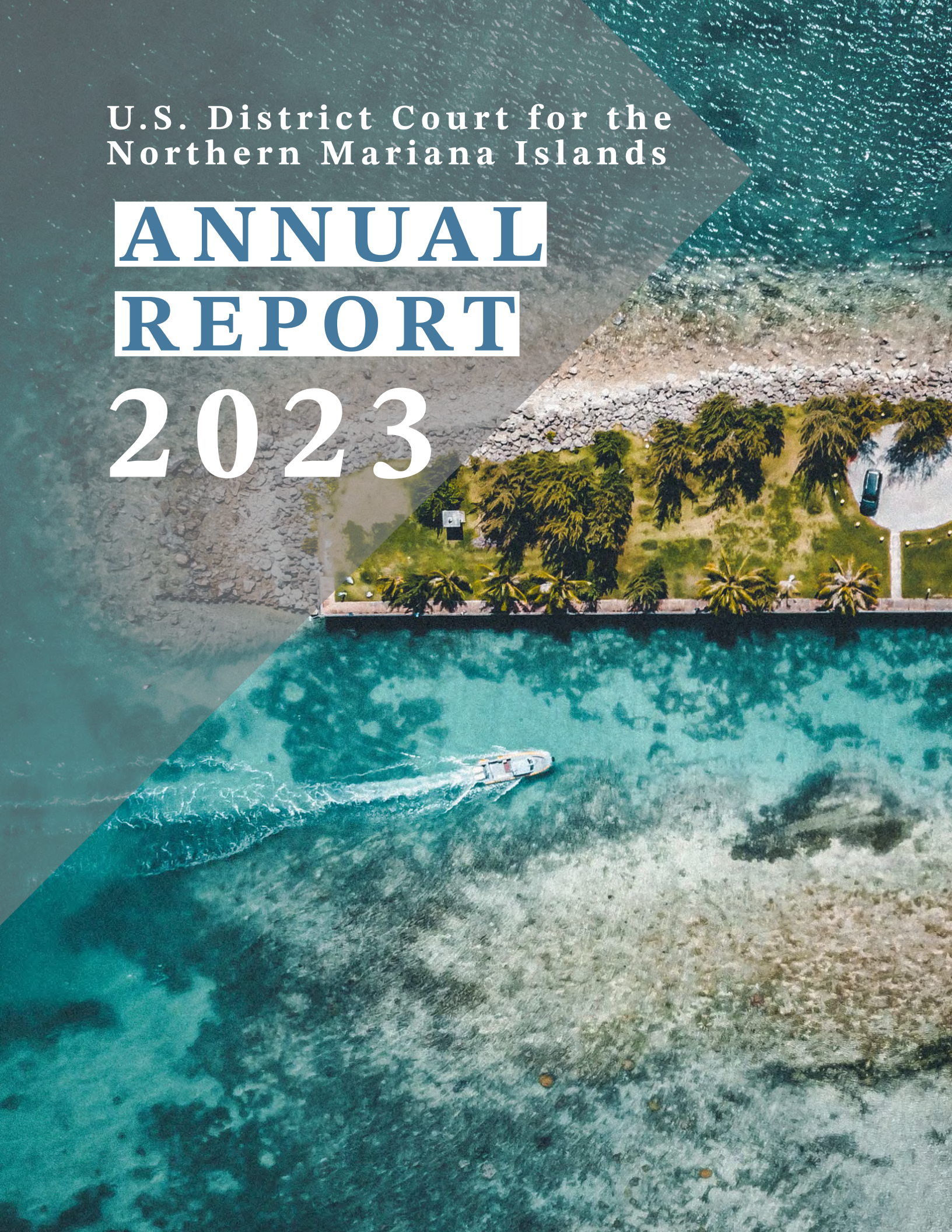


U.S. District Court for the  
Northern Mariana Islands

**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**  
**2023**







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



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# 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.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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 eleven Clerk's Office staff. The Clerk of Court also serves as the Magistrate Judge. The Office of the Pretrial and Probation Services for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands has three 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 during civil and criminal trials and grand jury proceedings.



# FOREWORD

Greetings, Håfa Adai yan Tirow!

This past year during my renomination process, I reflected not just on my career but more importantly, on the vital role the judiciary fulfills in administering justice and serving the community. It is my pleasure to share with you the 2023 Annual Report for the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, which presents the opportunity to highlight these reflections and the achievements of those in our community. I am thankful for the District Court family and all the offices that work with us—without which this Report would not be possible.

Although the law is constantly changing, there are a few things at the courthouse that remain consistent. One that remained constant throughout 2023 was our courthouse filled with the joy and cheers of family members and friends of the 182 individuals sworn in at naturalization ceremonies. It is not only a privilege to preside over these ceremonies, but also an honor to be a minor part in their pathway to citizenship. We welcomed new citizens from over fifteen countries to our diverse district.

The District Court also provided opportunities for community members and students to learn from local attorneys, engage in critical thinking of civics, and spread awareness of pressing issues in our islands. In one event, "Learning from the Ladies in the Law," legal professionals highlighted their diverse backgrounds and how they shaped their journeys in their career paths. In other events, such as the POWER Act Webinar and Red Ribbon Campaign, our Court staff and legal professionals educated and showcased tools for engaging in difficult but important conversations, such as living drug free and domestic violence awareness.

Finally, the Court staff and I had the opportunity to not only engage with the CNMI youth but to learn from them. In the Ninth Circuit Civics Contest,



RAMONA V. MANGLONA  
CHIEF JUDGE

students answered the question, "What should our next amendment be?" Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy, my two law clerks, and I read the insightful essays of high schoolers across the Northern Mariana Islands in which students touched upon a wide range of legal issues. Additionally, students beautifully expressed themselves through art focused on the ideas of civics, civility, and collaboration in our Law Day Photo Contest. I encourage these students and all those in the CNMI to continue to engage with the judiciary in positive ways.

Court staff enjoy showcasing our beautiful, public courthouse and hopes to welcome more individuals of the CNMI community during tours and at our events in 2024. These events are only possible because of our team's strong commitment to public service and dedication to our community outreach programs. I am not only grateful but proud to work alongside them.

Si Yu'us Ma'åse yan Ghilisou,

Ramona V. Manglona  
Chief Judge

# JUDGES



On January 26, 2011, President Barack Obama nominated the Honorable Ramona V. Manglona 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 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.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan nominated the Honorable Alex R. Munson to serve as District Court Judge for the NMI, and the U.S. Senate confirmed his nomination. Judge Munson was nominated for a second ten-year term by President William J. Clinton and was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 1998. In February 2010, Judge Munson took senior status after twenty-eight years of service in the legal community, including his service as Chief Justice of the High Court of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from 1982 to 1988. Judge Munson continues to serve the Court and the community by presiding over settlement conferences and other court matters in this District as well as the District Court of Guam.



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 Clerk 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. After an evaluation process, including public comments and review by a Merit Selection Panel, Chief Judge Manglona re-appointed Judge Kennedy to a third term on June 11, 2021. Judge Kennedy served as the Chair of the Ninth Circuit's Magistrate Judges Executive Board and as the Magistrate Judge Observer to the Ninth Circuit Judicial Council from October 2021-2023.



# 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), and Judge Marilyn L. Huff (Southern District of California) for their assistance.



Pursuant to 48 U.S.C. § 1821, 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 and Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio of the Commonwealth Superior Court for their service to this Court as designated judges.

# ATTORNEY REPRESENTATIVES

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT RESOURCE COUNSEL



BRUCE L. BERLINE

Bruce L. Berline is the District Court's Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Representative and Resource Counsel. In districts that do not have a 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 Standing 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 in practice in the CNMI for over 25 years, focusing on criminal defense, admiralty, and personal injury litigation.

## NINTH CIRCUIT LAWYER REPRESENTATIVE

Nicole M. Torres-Ripple has served as our District's Ninth Circuit Lawyer Representative since 2022. In this capacity, she actively engages with other lawyer representatives to bring to light the challenges and important issues in each district, plans and executes engaging panel discussions to address these challenges, and discusses these issues at the Ninth Circuit's Annual Conference of Chief District Judges. She also coordinates continuing legal education for District Court bar members through the Annual District Conference and assists in planning District Court outreach programs.

In 2016, Ms. Torres-Ripple joined the NMI Settlement Fund as In-House Counsel. Prior to joining the Settlement Fund, she served as a law clerk to Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro of the Commonwealth Supreme Court. Ms. Torres-Ripple has previously served on numerous court and professional committees, including the District Merit Selection Panel, District Conference Planning Committee, NMI Supreme Court Rules Committee, CNMI Bar Association Board of Directors, and CNMI Bar Association Continuing Legal Education, Bylaws, and Executive Director Selection Committees. She has also served as the coordinator and planning committee member for CNMI Judiciary outreach programs, including the CNMI Judiciary Summer Pre-law Program, Mock Trial Academy, and High School Mock Trial competition. She was a coach and juror for high school mock trial. Ms. Torres-Ripple proudly hails from the CNMI—she grew up in Saipan, graduated from Grace Christian Academy, and returned to the CNMI in 2013 after earning her J.D. at the University of Hawai'i Richardson School of Law, and obtaining her B.A. in sociology, *summa cum laude*, with a minor in legal studies from the University of San Francisco. She is married to James W. K. Ripple, PE, and they are blessed with a beautiful daughter, Maile Priscilla.



NICOLE M. TORRES-RIPPLE



# ATTORNEY ADMISSIONS

## ATTORNEY ADMISSION FUND



The Court admitted nine attorneys to practice in 2023. As of 2023, the District Court Bar membership consists of 105 permanent and 36 temporary members.



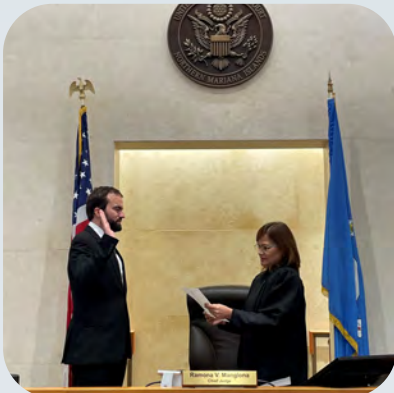
Assistant U.S. Attorneys Albert Flores, Jr., Eric O'Malley, and Ashley Kost with Magistrate Judge Kennedy after AUSA Kost was sworn in.



Former Law Clerk Gretchen Smith with her partner, the two current Law Clerks, and Chief Judge Manglona after Attorney Smith was sworn in.



Assistant Attorney General Gregory Cenac Jr. and his partner with Chief Judge Manglona after AAG Cenac was sworn in.



Attorney Keith Chambers II being sworn in by Chief Judge Manglona.



Assistant Attorney General Joshua Willis signing his oath.



Assistant Attorney General Rellani Ogunmoro being sworn in by Chief Judge Manglona.

The Attorney Admission Fund is 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.

# CHIEF JUDGE MANGLONA PRESENTED AT THE TENTH BIENNIAL LAW AND THE FRESHMAN LEGISLATOR EVENT

On January 6, 2023, the CNMI Judiciary conducted the Tenth Law and the Freshman Legislator program at the Guma' Hustisia. The program, held biennially since 2004 for newly elected legislators, provides an overview of the judicial process and gives the newly elected legislators a rare opportunity to interact with federal and CNMI judges and justices.

The Saipan representatives in attendance included Rep.-elect Vincent S. Aldan, Rep.-elect Diego F. Camacho, Rep.-elect Manny T. Castro, Rep.-elect Marissa Flores, Rep.-elect Malcom Omar, Rep.-elect Angelo A. Camacho, and Rep.-elect Thomas DLC. Manglona. Sen.-elect Dennis C. Mendiola and Rep.-elect Julie A. Ogo represented Rota. No representative from Tinian was present as they had no new legislator this cycle.

Commonwealth Supreme Court Associate Justice John A. Manglona moderated the program, which began with a presentation by Commonwealth Supreme Court Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro on the Covenant and the U.S. and CNMI Constitutions. Chief Judge Manglona presented on the topic of statutory interpretation. The incoming legislators discussed the role of the courts with a panel of judges and justices. Dean M. Palacios, Executive Director of the Law Revision Commission, gave a presentation on legal research. The program concluded with a roundtable discussion where the judges and justices answered questions from the legislators.





# *Nomination of Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona for a Second Ten-Year Term*

On August 30, 2023, President Joseph R. Biden nominated U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona for another ten-year term of service. President Barack H. Obama first nominated Chief Judge Manglona to the position in 2011. She is the first woman and first person of NMI descent to serve as a judge for this District Court.

On November 15, 2023, Chief Judge Manglona appeared before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington, D.C. for her confirmation hearing. Congressman Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan appeared at the confirmation hearing, during which he spoke in support of Chief Judge Manglona and asked the committee to confirm her nomination.



Chief Judge Manglona appeared before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington, D.C. for her confirmation hearing along with Sara E. Hill and John D. Russell, district judge nominees for the Northern District of Oklahoma.



Chief Judge Manglona responded to questions about leading the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands through recent super typhoons and the pandemic. She was also asked about her responsibilities as the sole federal district judge in the CNMI.

In December 2023, the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee advanced Chief Judge Manglona's nomination to the full Senate.

Her nomination was pending and thus returned to the President when the first session of the 118th Congress adjourned on January 3, 2024.

# Women's History Month MEET & MINGLE



Learning from the Ladies in  
the Law

On March 31, 2023, the District Court and the CNMI Bar Association hosted its inaugural Women's History Month Meet and Mingle - Learning from the Ladies in the Law, a community engagement event at the U.S. Courthouse aimed to enhance and promote diversity in the legal profession by highlighting the stories of women with diverse backgrounds, including practicing attorneys, working professionals, and judges who work with the federal judiciary.

The distinguished panel of women included Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, Magistrate Judge/Clerk of Court Heather L. Kennedy, Designated Judge and Commonwealth Superior Court Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio, U.S. Probation Officer Juanette F. David-Atalig, Criminal Justice Act Defense Attorney Janet H. King, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Ashley Kost. The panel shared their experiences and insights as women working in the legal profession in the CNMI.



L-R: CJA Defense Attorney King, U.S. Probation Officer David-Atalig, Chief Judge Manglona, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Associate Judge Kim-Tenorio, and AUSA Kost.

“

We are proud to have hosted the first Women's Month Meet and Mingle-Learning from the Ladies in the Law event in the CNMI. By showcasing the diverse backgrounds and experiences of female jurists and legal professionals, we aim to inspire and encourage more women to pursue careers in law and help enhance diversity in the legal field.

-Chief Judge Manglona

”



The filled courtroom of attendees included students from the Northern Marianas College, the CNMI Public School System, President of the CNMI Bar Association Charity R. Hodson, other members of the Bar Association, court staff from both the U.S. District Court and the CNMI Judiciary, as well as interested community members.



## Proclamation

LAW WEEK  
May 1-5, 2023

Cornerstones of Democracy: Civics, Civility, and Collaboration

Whereas, in 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower first established Law Day as "a day of national dedication to the principles of government under law;"

Whereas, in 1961, Congress issued a joint resolution declaring May 1st as Law Day, which is a national day to recognize and celebrate our justice system and the rule of law;

Whereas, events related to Law Day will be expanded to one week, and the theme as set forth by the American Bar Association is "Cornerstones of Democracy: Civics, Civility, and Collaboration;"

Whereas, at times throughout our nation's history, there have been divisions in society, aggravated by incivility in public discourse and insufficient understanding of the constitutional process and civic engagement;

Whereas, even the American founders overcame deep divisions to craft our great charter of government;

Whereas, as all Americans must remember, President Lincoln proclaimed: "We are not enemies, but friends...though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection;"

Whereas, cultivating civility and collaboration in public life is essential to the operation of democracy and republican government;

Whereas, the leaders of the Commonwealth should promote collaboration to overcome our differences and resolve our disputes so that we may strengthen the bonds of affection between citizens, and ensure an understanding of how our constitutional order safeguards the blessings of liberty;

# LAW DAY

## Proclamation ACROSS THE MARIANAS

In celebration of Law Month, the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, the Judiciary of the Northern Mariana Islands, the District Court of Guam, and the Guam Bar Association, collaborated for this unique joint ceremony. Judges and justices appeared virtually from Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.



Top L - Bottom R: Hon. Lourdes Leon Guerrero, Governor of Guam; Hon. Joshua Tenorio, Lt. Governor of Guam; Chief Justice Robert J. Torres, Supreme Court of Guam; Speaker Therese M. Terlaje, 37th Guam Legislature; Hon. Arnold I. Palacios, Governor of the CNMI; Hon. David M. Apatang, Lt. Governor of the CNMI; Chief Justice Alexandro C. Casto, Justice John A. Manglona, and Justice Perry B. Inos, Supreme Court of the NMI; Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, and Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy, U.S. District Court for the NMI; CNMI Senator Donald M. Manglona from Rota; Mayor Edwin P. Aldan of Tinian and Aguiguan; Mayor Aubry Hocog of Rota; Edward Diaz, CNMI Drug Court Manager; Journalist Thomas A. Manglona II; Alicia Limtiaco, Regulation Counsel, Supreme Court of Guam; presenters and attendees at the Supreme Court of Guam; attendees at the U.S. District Court for the NMI; presenters at Guma' Hustisia (Saipan); presenters at Rota Centron Hustisia and Kotten Tinian; Jacqueline T. Terlaje, President of Guam Bar Association.



CNMI Governor Arnold I. Palacios giving his remarks and declaring May 1st through May 5th as Law Week in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.



Reading of the Proclamation. L-R: Magistrate Judge/Clerk of Court Heather L. Kennedy; Assistant U.S. Attorney Albert S. Flores, Jr.; CJA Attorney Robert T. Torres; Ninth Circuit Lawyer Representative Nicole M. Torres-Ripple.

# POWER ACT

## PRO BONO: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS

The "Pro Bono Work to Empower and Represent Act of 2018" ("the POWER Act") is a federal statute passed by Congress intended to address disturbingly high rates of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking across the country by encouraging pro bono legal assistance to empower survivors of these crimes.

On September 27, 2023, the District Court held its first POWER Act Webinar with participation from other vital CNMI stakeholders including the CNMI Judiciary and Micronesian Legal Services Corporation. Attendees were able to refresh their knowledge on the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (PL 12-19) and the Anti-Violence Leave Act (PL 18-31). Other topics included the benefits of providing pro bono service, an overview of the CNMI Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) and Protection Laws, TRO forms, and working with victims and perpetrators.

**Wednesday**  
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

**September 27, 2023**

## 2023 NMI POWER ACT WEBINAR

**Attend and Earn Two FREE CLE Credits!**

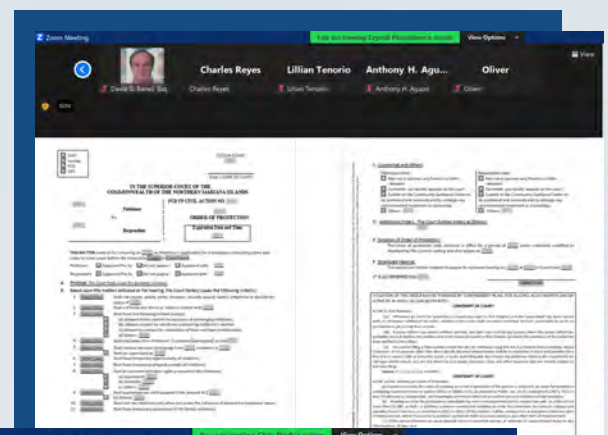
**Chris Heeb, Micronesian Legal Services Corporation**

- The Nuts and Bolts of the CNMI TRO and Protection Laws
- Pro Bono. What are the benefits?

**Crystal Pangellinan, Family Court Manager, CNMI Judiciary**

- Overview of CNMI TRO Forms

**Register Now**





# NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES



New U.S. Citizens taking the Oath

In 2023, the District Court held ten naturalization ceremonies and swore in 182 individuals from fifteen countries as new citizens. They came from Australia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, China, Colombia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Macau, Palau, Paraguay, the Philippines, Slovakia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand.

## 2023 Keynote Speakers:

- *Dr. Beylul Solomon - Associate Professor at Northern Marianas College*
- *Attorney Charity Hodson - President, CNMI Bar Association*
- *Honorable Arnold I. Palacios - Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*
- *Jane Mack - Directing Attorney, Micronesian Legal Services Corporation, Marianas Office*
- *Dr. Bobby Cruz - State Education Agency Director, CNMI Public School System*
- *Honorable David M. Apatang - Lt. Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*
- *Dr. Rita A. Sablan - Former CNMI Public School System Commissioner*
- *Attorney Pamela Brown - Former Attorney General*
- *Attorney Joe McDoulett - Veteran of Foreign Wars*
- *Rear Admiral Gregory C. Huffman - Commander of Joint Regions Marianas*



Guest Speaker CNMI Governor Arnold I. Palacios with Chief Judge Manglona, Immigration Services Officer Patricia Phelan, and the new citizens.



Guest Speaker Dr. Rita A. Sablan with Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Immigration Services Officer Christine Cepeda, and the new citizens.





Chief Judge Manglona giving welcoming remarks during a naturalization ceremony.



Rear Admiral Gregory C. Huffman, Commander, Joint Region Marianas, giving remarks as guest speaker.



Guest Speaker Rear Admiral Gregory C. Huffman with Chief Judge Manglona, Immigration Services Officer Patricia Phelan, and the new citizens.



Rear Admiral Gregory C. Huffman congratulating and handing a certificate to a new citizen.



New U.S. citizens wave U.S. flags while "America the Beautiful" played.





One of the new citizens sharing his path towards citizenship.



Guest Speaker CNMI Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang with Chief Judge Manglona, Immigration Services Officer Patricia Phelan, and the new citizens.



New U.S. citizens wave U.S. flags while "America the Beautiful" played.



Guest Speaker Attorney Pamela Brown with Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Immigration Services Officer Riley Huskey, and the new citizens.



Guest Speaker Attorney Joe McDoulett with Senior Judge Munson, Immigration Services Officer Phelan, and the new citizens.



Senior Judge Alex R. Munson congratulating and handing a certificate to a new citizen.



# JUDGE CARTER — visits — CNMI SCHOOLS



During the months of February and March of 2023, Designated Judge David O. Carter from the Central District of California visited several schools including Marianas High School, Saipan Southern High School, Da'Ok Academy, and Tinian Jr. Sr. High School.

Designated Judge David O. Carter has been presiding over the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation case, 1:08-cv-00051, since 2010.





*The 28th Amendment*  
*What Should Our Next Amendment Be?*



Ratification of the 19th Amendment in the State of Nevada, Feb. 7, 1920

**2023 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST**

Cash Prizes!  
 1st \$3,000  
 2nd \$1,700  
 3rd \$1,000

An essay and video contest for high school students in the western United States and Pacific Islands. Contest rules and entry instructions available at <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>

Entries accepted beginning January 4, 2023. Deadline for entries is March 13, 2023. Sponsored by the United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit.

\* Plus Travel and accommodations to attend the 2023 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.  
 \* May be subject to federal, state or local laws unless exemptions apply.

# NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST

The Ninth Circuit Civics Contest is an essay and video contest held annually for high school students in the western United States, NMI, and Guam jurisdictions. The 2023 theme was "The 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution: What Should Our Next Amendment Be?" Students were invited to submit creative and thoughtful videos and essays capturing the theme.

Students throughout the CNMI submitted a total of three videos and seventy-nine essays ranging between 500 to 1,000 words in length to the Ninth Circuit. The essays were returned to the NMI District Court without any name or school identifiers and were judged solely on the students' understanding of constitutional principles, clarity, effectiveness in expressing the theme, grammar, spelling, composition, use of footnotes, and bibliographies properly attributing information taken from other sources. The Court held an award ceremony for the winners.

## Winners for the Essay Contest:

- 1st Place - Jaimer Shawne Casama**  
**2nd Place - Tyana Kay Cepeda**  
**3rd Place - Jia Ross Nicdao**

\*The top three students are from Marianas High School.



Jia Ross Nicdao from Marianas High School placed in the top 12 at the Ninth Circuit level.

## Winners for the Video Contest:

- 1st Place - Xinyi Ni and Vincent Razon, Kagman High School**  
**2nd Place - Joseph Victor Jimenez and Pony Tang, Marianas High School**  
**3rd Place - Gavril Myles Santiago, Mount Carmel School**



Winners from both the Essay Contest and Video Contest gathered together with Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy for a group photo after the awards presentation.

# Third Annual LAW DAY PHOTO CONTEST

In May 2023, the District Court held its Third Annual Law Day Photo Contest.

Law Day is celebrated nationally on May 1st each year to recognize the rule of law. Law Day underscores how the law and legal process have contributed to the freedoms that we all enjoy.

The 2023 Law Day theme, "Cornerstones of Democracy: Civics, Civility, and Collaboration," focused on rebuilding trust in our institutions, respect for one another, and our willingness to collaborate to address the challenges that our nation faces.

This photo contest was open to all middle and high school students in the CNMI. All submissions were required to reflect the theme and include a brief description on how the photo represents the theme. Photos were judged according to their originality, creativity, and encapsulation of the theme.



## HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS



**1st Place: Xinyi Ni**  
**Title of Photo: Our Plate**  
**12th Grade, Kagman High School**

"My photo depicts a plate of assorted rosary food. Each year on Mother's Day, we celebrate the finakpo' or the last day of the rosary: for San Isidro in Chalan Kanoa. What's so beautiful about this is when different families from District IV come together and put out their cooking to share. Even with the tense atmosphere the recent election season created, it suddenly does not matter if one family is Democrat or the other is Republican, they collaborated for one goal, to celebrate. This is like in our democratic system, the idea of compromising when deliberating on an issue. Even with a now divided government, when problems need immediate solutions, both parties get together and try to find a solution. This plate of rosary food is a representation of the willingness to collaborate in our community and our country."







**2nd Place: Janiy Mohammed**  
**11th Grade, Marianas High School**



"This image portrays a demolished wall which once stood. The image shown captures 3 people who can be seen actively building that same wall, which symbolizes our government working together to rebuild and strengthen our democracy. The closest person represents the strength of our leaders, looking out for our people. The individual is seen facing towards the light, foreseeing a brighter future for all. The second person on the right symbolizes the people, who play a major part in upholding our democracy. In cooperating with our government, we contribute towards the strengthening of our union. Finally, the person on the left represents our congress and our government employees. Being seen holding the largest brick, it represents the individuals who uphold their job for the sake of upholding our democracy. Within rebuilding this wall, we uphold the cornerstone of our democracy, the unity between the government and the people."



**3rd Place: Seungeun Ha**  
**Title of Photo: Collaboration of Flags**  
**10th Grade, Mount Carmel School**



"Flag(s), always represents the country. Living in our daily life, we feel free in a nation under democracy. We collaborate and treat others with civility. Under the flags, we feel proud at its country, collaborating with one another."

## MIDDLE SCHOOL WINNER

\*Only one submission for middle school.



**1st Place: Maria Guerrero**  
**Title of Photo: Return to Grassroots**  
**6th Grade, Mount Carmel School**



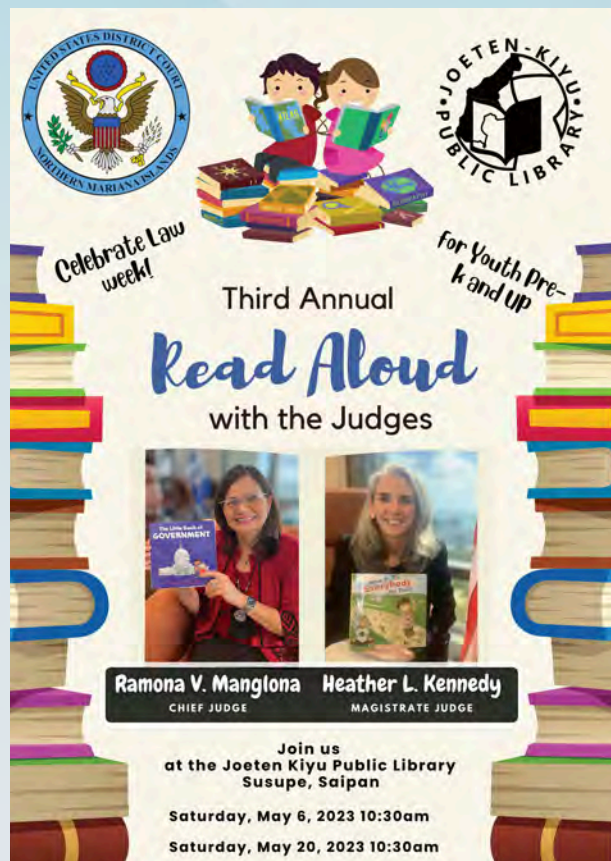
"The main purpose of Democracy is to ensure the Power remain with People. The Power of Mother Nature can be a euphemism for Civics, Civility and Collaboration."



# THIRD ANNUAL READ ALOUD WITH THE JUDGES

In May 2023, Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy participated in their Third Annual "Read Aloud with the Judges" event in partnership with the Joeten Kiyu Public Library.

Chief Judge Manglona read "The Little Book of Government," by Zach Bush and Laurie Friedman. Magistrate Judge Kennedy read "What If Everybody Did That?" by Ellen Javernick.





# COURTHOUSE TOURS

The U.S. Courthouse sits majestically in Gualo Rai with gorgeous views of Saipan's turquoise lagoon. Since the courthouse publicly opened in 2020, there have been many tour requests. The guided tours often include visits to the U.S. Probation Office, the Law Library, the Second Floor Courtroom, the Clerk's Office, the Magistrate Judge/Visiting Judge's Chambers, the Third Floor Courtroom, and the Chief Judge's Chambers, among other courthouse spaces. 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](https://www.nmid.uscourts.gov/forms/tour_request.pdf)



High school students from the Junior Statesmen of America Micronesia Chapter gathered for a group photo in front of the Courthouse.



William S. Reyes Elementary School, with the largest group at 93 students, visited the Courthouse on May 16, 2023. In this photo, students were having a meet and greet session with Magistrate Judge Kennedy.





CNMI Girl Scouts gathered with Chief Judge Manglona, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, U.S. Probation Officers Arriola & David-Atalig, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Flores for a group photo.



Students from South Korea posed for a photo with Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



Delegates from the Federated States of Micronesia Supreme Court, the Chuuk State Supreme Court, the Yap State Court, and the Pohnpei State Supreme Court gathered with Magistrate Judge Kennedy for a photo during a courthouse tour.



Students had the opportunity to meet with Immigration and Customs Enforcement Deportation Officer Sean White.



Students from the Junior Statesmen of America Micronesia Chapter gathered for a group photo after their courthouse tour with IT Security Officer Dr. Jonathan Liwag.



Supervisory Deputy U.S. Marshal Shane Wilhite demonstrated the equipment that U.S. Marshals may use.





Whole Person Academy gathered with Magistrate Judge Kennedy and IT Security Officer Dr. Jonathan Liwag for a group photo.



Saipan Southern High School's Close Up Club gathered for a group photo with Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Chief Deputy Clerk Bill Bezzant, and IT Security Officer Dr. Liwag.



Chief Judge Manglona explained the judiciary system to students from the Achieve CNMI Summer Program.



One of the JSA Micronesia Chapter students asked a question during a meet and greet session.



Officer Arriola met with students and explained his role as a U.S. Probation Officer.



Students from Saipan SDA School performed for court staff after their court tour.

# RED RIBBON CAMPAIGN



The 2023 Red Ribbon Campaign Theme was "Be Kind to Your Mind. Live Drug Free.™"

The Red Ribbon Campaign started after drug traffickers in Mexico City, Mexico murdered Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena in 1985. Friends and neighbors wore red badges in his honor and to show that they will continue to fight against illegal drugs.

Since then, there has been a continuing tradition of wearing and displaying red ribbons as a symbol of intolerance towards the use of illegal drugs. The main purpose of the Red Ribbon Campaign is to present a unified and visible commitment to the creation of a Drug-Free America. The campaign is the oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation, reaching millions of young people.

Magistrate Judge Kennedy, AUSA Flores, U.S. Probation Officer Arriola, and Inspirational Speaker Joanna Castro visited students at Da'ok Academy to speak about their roles in the judicial system.

Ms. Castro spoke about her personal history, including her federal conviction, life in prison, and the limitations she has while under supervised release. She encouraged the students to learn from her experiences.



Panelists answering students' questions. L-R: U.S. Probation Officer Arriola, Assistant U.S. Attorney Flores, Inspirational Speaker Joanna Castro, and Magistrate Judge Kennedy



Inspirational Speaker Joanne Castro sharing her experience with students.



Students reciting the Red Ribbon Pledge.



Assistant U.S. Attorney Flores giving his presentation.



# RED RIBBON GATE / WALL

## CONTEST

In celebration of Red Ribbon Week, the District Court held its annual Red Ribbon Week Gate/Wall Decorating Contest. Schools from across the CNMI entered the contest and showed their artistic and creative ideas. This year's winner was Sinapalo Elementary School. Coming in second was Golden Harvest International School, and Da'Ok Academy came in third.



**SINAPALO ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL**



**GOLDEN HARVEST  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**



**DA'OK ACADEMY**



Sinapalo Elementary School's Counselor Ms. Glengela Realin gathered with Magistrate Judge Kennedy, U.S. Probation Officer Arriola, and Case Administrator Justin Poon for a photo during the trophy presentation.

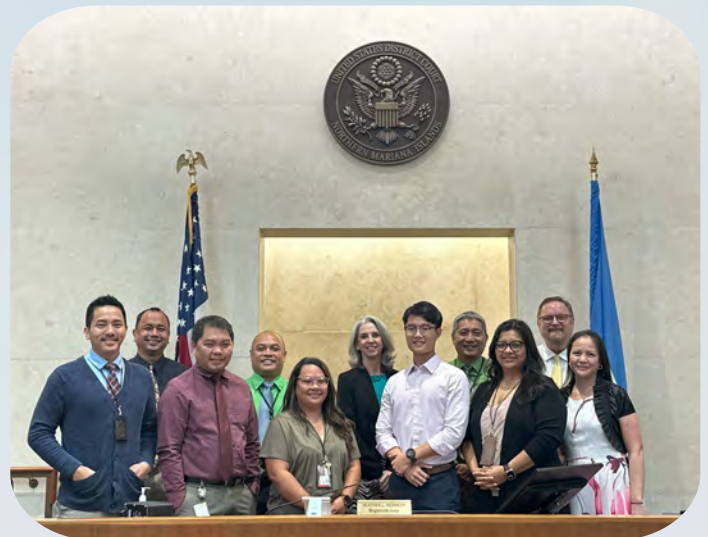


# STAFFING UPDATES



**NICOLE B. SABLAN** joined the Court staff as Case Administrator in February 2023. Nicole brings a wealth of experience from her fifteen years of work at the U.S. Attorney's Office.

**JUSTIN X. POON**, Case Administrator, started working with the District Court in April 2023. Justin graduated from the University of Alabama in 2017 with a B.S. in Marketing and International Business. He is a member of the Air Force Reserve, 624th Aerospace Medicine Flight, based out of Anderson Air Force Base, Guam.



**HANNAH M. ROBERTSON**, Law Clerk, started working with the District Court in September 2023. Hannah was sworn in virtually by Chief Judge Manglona before her arrival to Saipan. On December 8, 2023, Hannah was sworn in again by Chief Judge Manglona after she passed the Washington, D.C., Bar Exam.





**TIMOTHY WESLEY** (left) was recognized with a milestone service pin award for fifteen years of dedication and service at the District Court.

**AIKO ERUNGEL** (right) was recognized with a milestone service pin award of five years with the District Court.



**FLEURETTA INOS** (left) was recognized with a milestone service pin award of ten years with the U.S. Probation Office.

**DANIEL BROWN** (right) was recognized with a milestone service pin award for ten years of service at the District Court.



**HEATHER L. KENNEDY**, Clerk of Court/ Magistrate Judge, was recognized with a milestone service pin award and cake cutting celebration for ten years of hard work and dedication at the District Court.

In April 2023, staff celebrated the 2023 Administrative Professionals' Day lunch at Kensington Hotel Saipan.





In July 2023, **WILLIAM BEZZANT** was recognized with a milestone service pin award for **thirty years** of commitment and dedication at the District Court. Court staff celebrated with Bill with a breakfast gathering.

## EMPLOYEE FAREWELLS



**JARED ARTHUR ROSANDER** (second from right), externed with the District Court from July to August in 2023.



**DANIEL BROWN** was recognized for his enthusiasm, creativity, insight, and significant contributions to the Court and its community outreach programs during his service at the District Court.



Farewell lunch for Daniel Brown at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

**GRETCHEN A. SMITH**, Law Clerk, ended her three year term with the District Court in September 2023.





# Training & Development



On June 21, 2023, the District Court staff participated in a workshop entitled "Closing the Generational Gap - Effective Communication Strategies to Bridge Generational Differences," facilitated by Administrative Specialist Daniel Brown.

The Court fosters personal and professional development, diversity, and inclusion when hosting various training, and team building activities throughout the year.

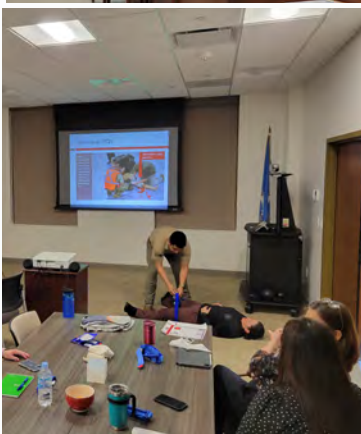
## 2023 Training and Development Activities

### **Closing the Generational Gap: Effective Communication Strategies to Bridge Generational Differences**

**Customs, Traditions & the Law**

**IT Security Awareness**

**Active Shooter Training**



On October 13, 2023, the District Court staff and U.S. Probation and Pre-trial Services Office attended the "Customs, Traditions, and the Law" seminar presented by the Northern Marianas Judiciary Historical Society.



On October 18, 2023, the District Court staff participated in an annual IT Security Training facilitated by IT Security Officer, Dr. Jonathan Liwag. The training covered Social Engineering, Phishing, and best IT security practices.

On December 4-5, 2023, the District Court staff participated in a two-day Active Shooter training conducted by the U.S. Marshals Service. Staff practiced active shooter scenarios and learned to apply life-saving skills.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS AND OTHER EVENTS



The winners of the 2023 High School Mock Trial - Marianas High School.



Chief Judge Manglona interacts with students at the Marianas High School's Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Event.



Magistrate Judge Kennedy swore in Hopwood Junior High School students to the National Junior Honor Society.

Through the continuing partnership with the CNMI Public School System, the Court's IT Security Officer, Dr. Liwag, provided data security and protection training to all vice principals in the CNMI Public School System.



A group photo of all vice principals from the CNMI Public School System with IT Security Officer Dr. Liwag after the training.



Magistrate Judge Kennedy gives a presentation at a local high school as part of the "Judges in the Classroom and Civics Engagement" event in 2023.

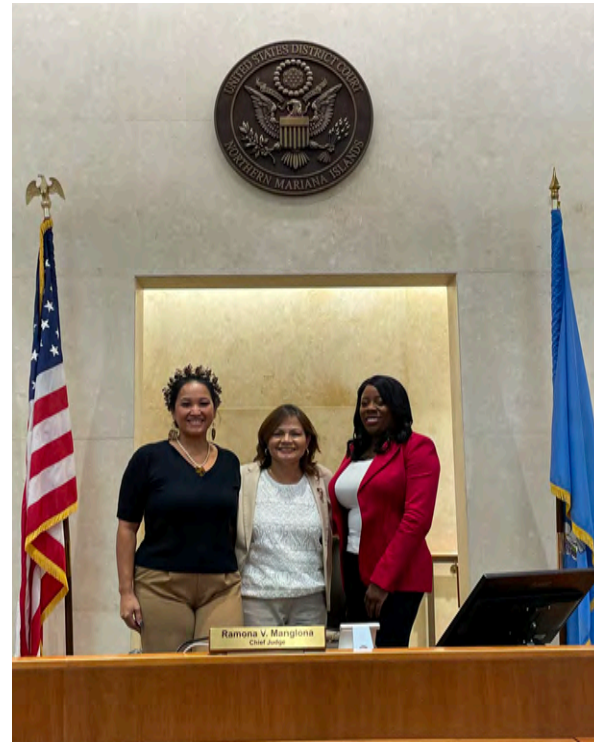




Chief Judge Manglona gives remarks at the CNMI Bar Association's continuing legal education event on April 19, 2023, which was held at the District Court.



Attorneys from the CNMI Bar Association gathered for a group photo with Kaylin L. Whittingham after her continuing legal education presentation on ethical issues at the District Court.



L-R: Guam Bar Association President Jacqueline Terlaje, Chief Judge Manglona, and Presenter Kaylin L. Whittingham.

Marianas High School students Jenny Zhang, Julia Taitano, Princes Habal, and Yejin Son pose with Commonwealth Supreme Court Justices, Chief Judge Manglona, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, CNMI Judiciary and Public School System staff after the completion of the 2023 High School Moot Court Competition finals on December 7, 2023, at the Guma' Hustisia.



Judges, justices, attorneys, and distinguished guests throughout Micronesia gathered for a group photo during the Pacific Judicial Council's 2023 Technology Conference in November 2023.

# ***U.S. PROBATION & PRETRIAL SERVICES OFFICE***

## **STAFFING**

In May 2023, Jeffrey Ventura was promoted to Sentencing Guidelines Specialist. Jeff's journey with the office began as a Probation Clerk in 2009, and then two years later, in 2011, he became a U.S. Probation Officer. As an officer, he began in the Supervision Unit for a few years but eventually migrated to the Investigations Unit where his skill sets flourished. He has completed hundreds of presentence investigations since, in addition to pretrial investigation reports. He also manages the Cybercrime Program that was created in 2012 which incorporates digital forensics and special supervision for clients requiring those conditions. Jeff has a Bachelor's Degree in Historical and Political Studies and a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice Studies.



Also in May 2023, Trina Duenas was promoted to a U.S. Probation Officer Specialist. Trina joined the office in 2014, after working as a Probation Officer in the Superior Court of Guam for eight years. She currently supervises the majority of defendants on pretrial release. She created and implemented a program to help defendants prepare for sentencing, imprisonment, and supervision terms. She consistently rates as number one in the country for submitting case plans timely while managing the largest caseload in our District. She oversees the officer safety program which prioritizes officer's awareness, and preparedness for potential threats. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and she recently completed the requirements for her Master's Degree in Criminal Justice.



Chantel Maui Royal, a wife, mother of two adorable toddlers, and a full-time college student (NMC & UOG), joined the USPO Saipan team in January 2023 as a student intern. Chantel devoted her time learning about the federal criminal justice system, interacting with USPO clients and staff from other federal and local agencies, attending court hearings, and learning how to prepare presentence investigation reports. In September 2023, Chantel accompanied the Saipan USPO staff to Guam for the District Court of Guam's retreat and staff development day. Her term with the USPO ended on December 29, 2023, and we wish her well as she plans to continue her studies with the UOG and obtain her Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice in Spring 2024.



# TRAINING



In June 2023, the team from the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, consisting of the Honorable Ramona V. Manglona, Chief Judge, the Honorable Judge Heather L. Kennedy, Magistrate Judge, U.S. Probation Officer Specialist Greg Arriola, and U.S. Probation Officer Juanette David-Atalig; and from the District Court of Guam, consisting of the Honorable Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood, Chief Judge, the Honorable Michael J. Bordallo, Magistrate Judge, Chief U.S. Probation Officer Kim R. Walmsley, U.S. Probation Officer Janet Yamashita, and U.S. Probation Officer Specialist Trina Duenas attended the 2023 FJC-Center for Law, Brain & Behavior Workshop on Science-Informed Decision-Making. The workshop brought together interdisciplinary groups of federal criminal court stakeholders to learn from scholars and clinicians about the process of translating scientific insights into the key criminal case decision points including the initial appearances, violation hearings, presentence investigation, and sentencing.



L-R: U.S. Probation Officer Specialist Trina Duenas from the District Court of Guam, U.S Probation Officer Specialist Greg Arriola, U.S. Probation Officer Juanette David-Atalig from the District Court for the NMI, and U.S. Probation Officer Janet Yamashita from the District Court of Guam.



L-R: Chief Judge Jill Otake from the District of Hawaii, Chief Judge Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood from the District of Guam, and Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona from the District of Northern Mariana Islands.



In August of 2023, the administrative support staff team from the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands and the District Court of Guam attended the 2023 Annual Federal Court Clerks Association (FCCA) Conference that was held in Fort Worth, Texas. The 2023 FCCA Conference was a significant event because it was the first annual conference that was held since the Covid-19 pandemic, and more importantly, it afforded the opportunity for new and existing FCCA members to finally reconnect, network, and promote the exchange of ideas and information in the field of court administration. There were a wide range of presentation topics offered which stemmed from lessons in leadership, building relationships and serving beyond boundaries regardless of job titles, dealing with different generations in the workplace, investing for federal retirement, and Contracting Officers Certification Program Level 3 Training, which was completed by Northern Mariana Islands Administrative Specialist staff.



L-R: Case Administrator Francine Diaz from the District Court of Guam, U.S. Probation Administrative Specialist Fleurette Inos and Courtroom Deputy Francine Atalig from the District Court for the NMI, U.S. Probation Data Quality Analyst Elaine Gagarin from the District Court of Guam, Financial Administrator Supervisor Michelle Macaranas from the District Court for the NMI, U.S. Probation Support Specialist Marlena Pablo from the District Court of Guam.



L-R: Application Support Specialist Albert Corbin from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court of District of Nevada, Systems Manager Barbara Hattori and Clerk of Court Jeanne Quinata from the District Court of Guam, Patty Mendoza, Information Services Manager Glenn Mendoza from the District Court for the NMI, Automation Specialist Steven Paul Centino from the District Court of Guam, I.T. Security Officer Jonathan Liwag and U.S. Probation Office's Administrative Specialist Fleurette Inos (center) from the District Court for the NMI.

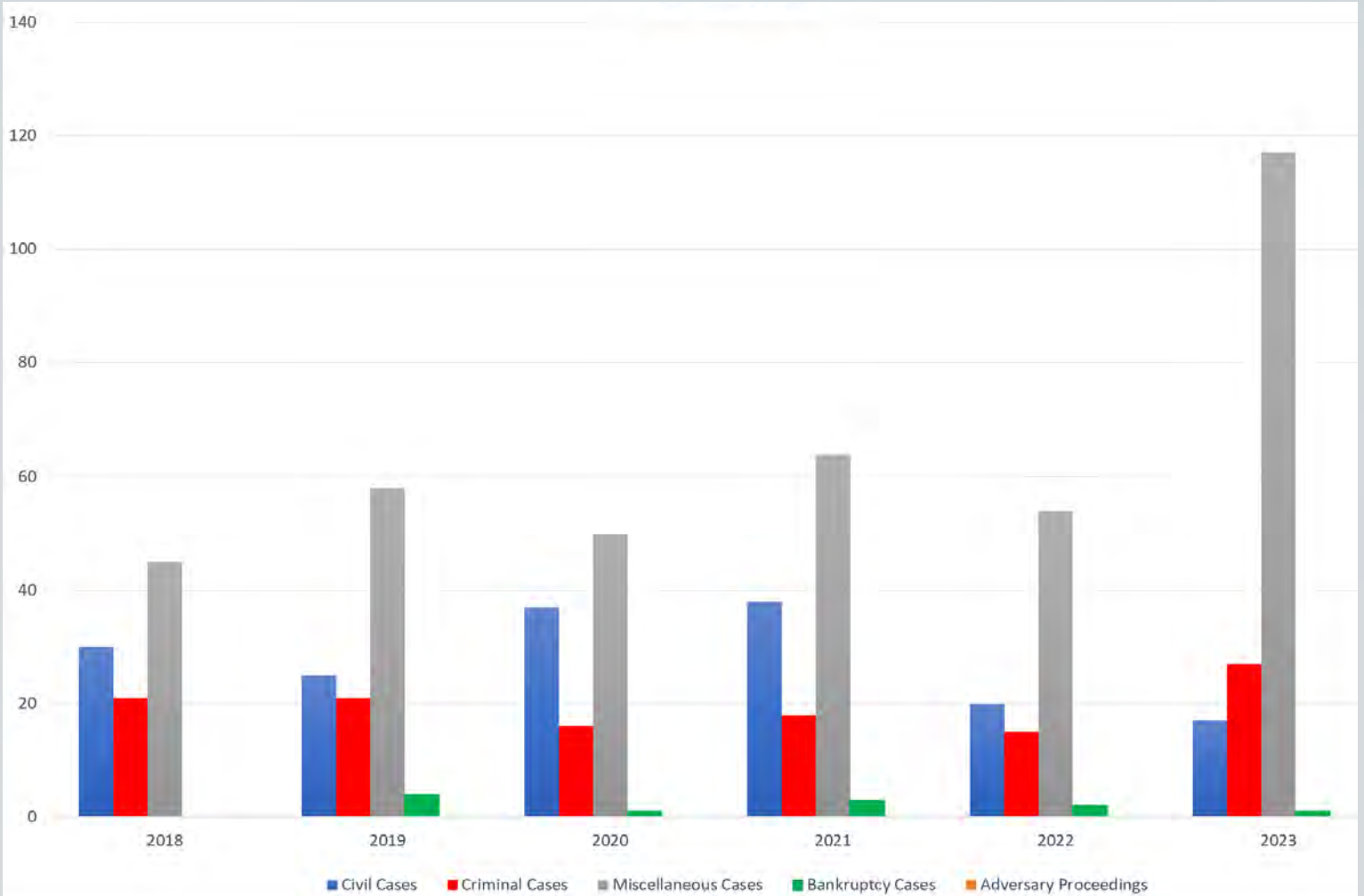
The first National IT Conference was held in Louisville, Kentucky from August 16-18, 2023. With over 725+ registered attendees from the Circuit offices, District Courts, Bankruptcy Courts, and Probation and Pretrial Offices, there was representation from all 50 states and all the U.S. territories, including participants from Saipan and Guam. The comprehensive agenda, a collaborative effort from the IT Court Community, was packed with sessions by the AO covering critical updates on national IT initiatives, as well as sessions discussing exciting innovations driven by the courts and providing opportunities to share local solutions to common challenges.



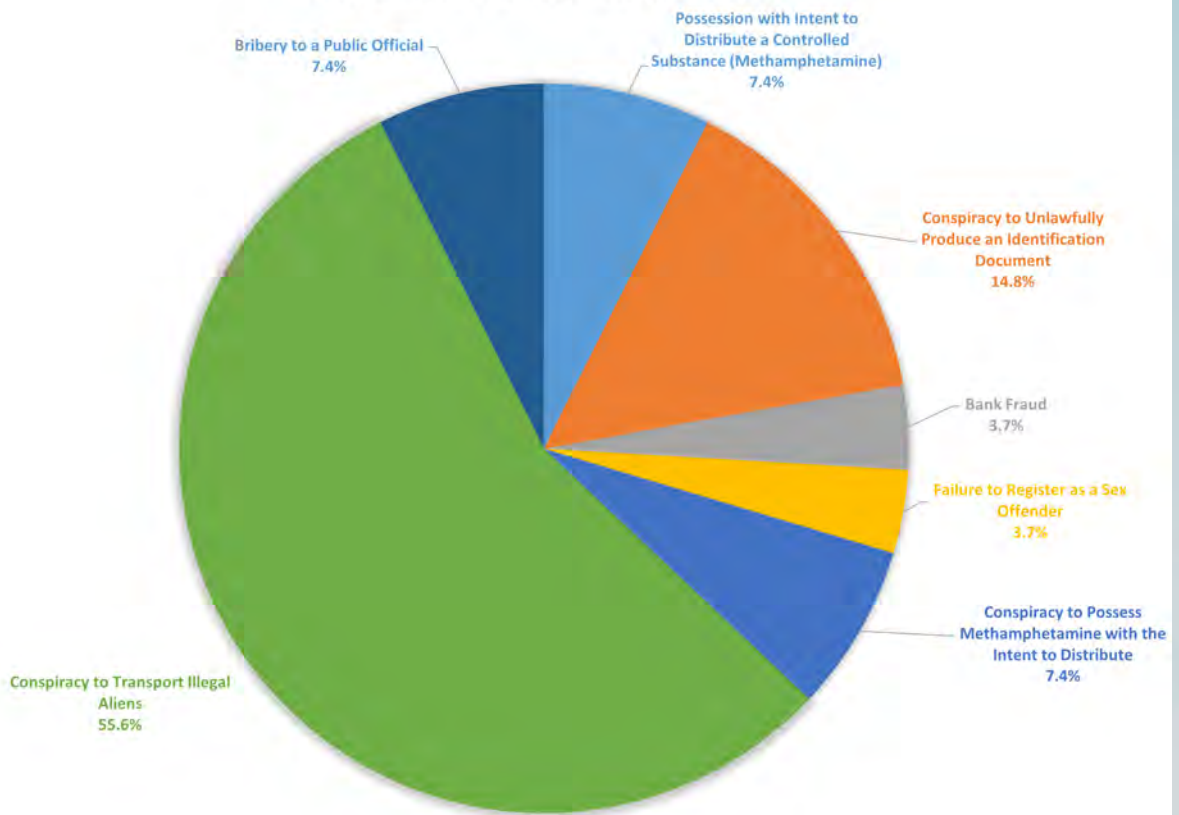


# STATISTICS 2023

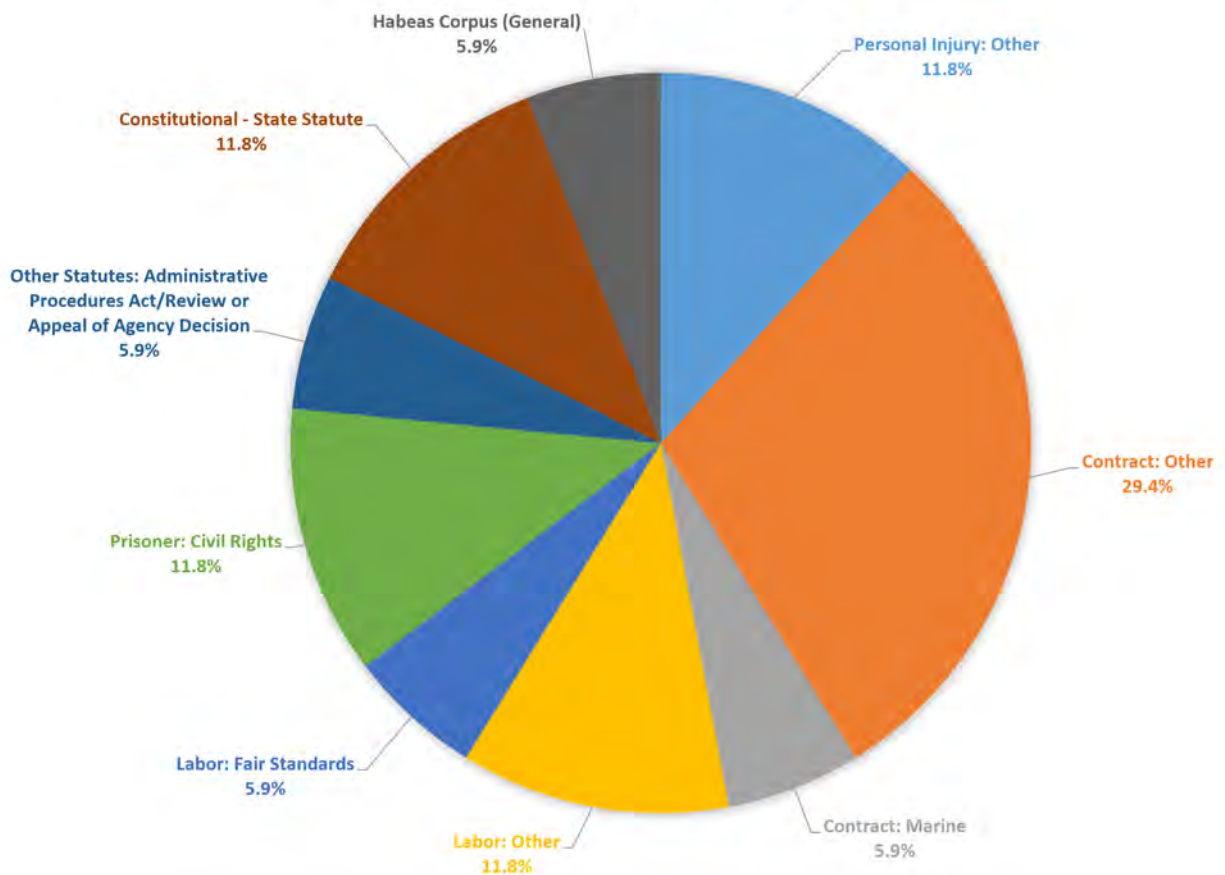
## CASES FILED FROM 2018 TO 2023



### 2023 CRIMINAL CASES - NATURE OF SUIT



### 2023 CIVIL CASES - NATURE OF SUIT





*Cover photo:*

*Entrance to Smiling Cove Marina Dock, Saipan.*

*Photo Credit: Justin Poon, Case Administrator, Clerk's Office*



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