

The background of the cover is an aerial photograph of the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands. The building is a modern, multi-story structure with a prominent portico supported by several columns. It is situated on a hill overlooking the ocean. The sky is a vibrant orange and yellow, indicating a sunset. The image is overlaid with several geometric shapes: a large dark blue triangle on the right side, a light blue triangle on the left, and a white triangle at the bottom right. There are also several hexagonal shapes in white and light blue scattered across the top and left sides.

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

PRESENTED BY:

**United States District Court for
the Northern Mariana Islands**



**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.

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 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!

Earlier in 2024, I was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and sworn in to serve my second term as Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands. I am deeply honored to have this opportunity to continue serving our community and the federal judiciary. It is my pleasure to share the 2024 Annual Report for the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands with you. The Annual Report highlights some of the many accomplishments of our court and community members.

The Northern Mariana Islands received international news coverage this year when Julian Assange entered his guilty plea in this Court on June 26, 2024. While the level of media coverage of the case was unprecedented, our team had the requisite expertise and ability to handle the preparations with ease. Despite the sensitive and expedited nature of Mr. Assange's case, the Court conducted Mr. Assange's proceedings as it would have for any other criminal defendant. I am proud of this Court's contribution to the administration of justice—on June 26, 2024 and on every other day.

The District Court continues to value community education and engagement as a pillar of its work. At the District Conference this year, attorneys, experts, and advocates gathered on Saipan to discuss the implications of using artificial intelligence in legal practice. The Conference also featured a panel about the provision of pro bono legal services for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the NMI. Our active outreach programs provided engagement opportunities for the students in our community. I was inspired by the creativity of the students who submitted photographs that represented democracy to the Law Day Photo Contest, and the thoughtfulness of the students who shared their ideas about the impact of *Brown v. Board of Education* through the Ninth Circuit Civics Contest. These opportunities to hear from students leave me excited about the future leaders that will serve our community.

In addition to cultivating the leadership of attorneys and students, the Court celebrated the naturalization of 213 individuals this year. Esteemed guest speakers at the naturalization ceremonies encouraged these new citizens to embrace the civic responsibilities bestowed upon American citizens and congratulated them on this new chapter of their lives. I am eager to see the contributions of these new citizens, perhaps through their service as jurors in this Court.

None of the Court's achievements would be possible without the support of my court staff and all the offices that work with us. Several court staff were honored this year for their longstanding service and excellence as employees. I am thankful for the individuals who contribute to the work of this Court and look forward to all that we will continue to accomplish together.

Si Yu'us Ma'åse yan Ghilisou,

Ramona V. Manglona
Chief Judge

Meet The Judges



Ramona V. Manglona

CHIEF JUDGE

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 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 in April, 2024. On April 22, 2024, she was sworn in to officially begin her second term as a district judge.



Alex R. Munson

SENIOR JUDGE

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan nominated the Honorable Alex R. Munson to serve as District Court Judge for the Northern Mariana Islands, 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.



Heather L. Kennedy

MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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. 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), Chief Bankruptcy Judge Robert J. Faris (Hawaii Bankruptcy Court), and Magistrate Judge Michael J. Bordallo (District of Guam) for their assistance.



Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood
CHIEF JUDGE
District Court of Guam



David O. Carter
DISTRICT JUDGE
U.S. District Court
Central District of California

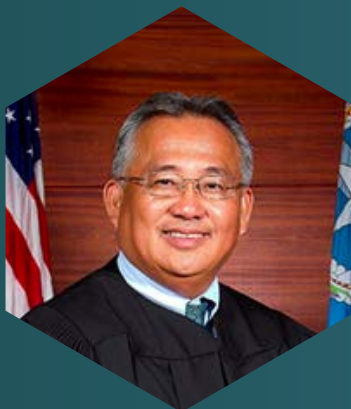


Robert J. Faris
CHIEF BANKRUPTCY JUDGE
U.S. Bankruptcy Court of Hawaii



Michael J. Bordallo
MAGISTRATE JUDGE
District Court of Guam

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.



Roberto C. Naraja
PRESIDING JUDGE
CNMI Superior Court

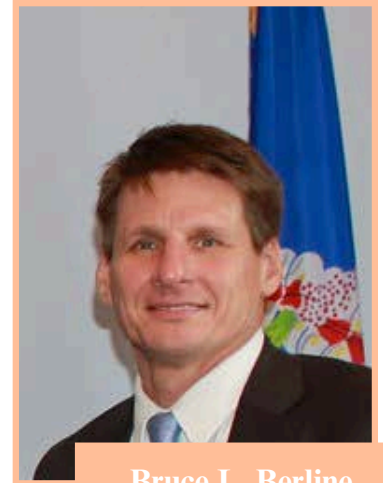


Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio
ASSOCIATE JUDGE
CNMI Superior Court

Attorney Representatives

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 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 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 in practice in the CNMI for over 25 years, focusing on criminal defense, admiralty, and personal injury litigation.



Bruce L. Berline

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 the District, assists in coordinating the Ninth Circuit's annual conferences, coordinates continuing legal education for District bar members through the Annual District Conference, and participates in District outreach programs.

In 2016, Ms. Torres-Ripple joined the NMI Settlement Fund as In-House Counsel. Before joining the Settlement Fund, she served as the law clerk to Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro of the CNMI 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, and Northern Marianas Bar Association Board of Directors and committees. She has also actively participated in CNMI Judiciary outreach programs, including the Summer Pre-Law Program, Mock Trial Academy, and High School Mock Trial and Moot Court.

Ms. Torres-Ripple proudly hails from the CNMI — she grew up in Saipan and graduated from Grace Christian Academy. In 2013, she returned to the CNMI after earning her J.D. at the University of Hawai'i Richardson School of Law, and obtaining her B.A. in sociology with a minor in legal studies from the University of San Francisco where she was awarded the Truman Scholarship. She is married to James W. K. Ripple, PE, and they are blessed with two beautiful children, Maile Priscilla, and Evan James.



Nicole M. Torres-Ripple

Attorney Admissions

The Court admitted fourteen attorneys to practice in 2024. As of December 31, 2024, the District Court Bar membership consists of 99 permanent and 49 temporary members.

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



Federal Public Defender Leilani Lujan, Assistant Federal Public Defender Nicole Breazeale, and Assistant Federal Public Defender Briana Kottke from Guam being sworn in virtually by Chief Judge Manglona, with Magistrate Judge Kennedy also in attendance.

Attorney Admission Fund

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.



Photo Credit: KUAM News Thomas Manglona II

Handling a High-Profile Case in the Pacific

The criminal case of international intrigue involving Julian Paul Assange, 53, the founder of Wikileaks, which played out for over a decade in major world stages, came to a surprise end in a most unusual setting. Assange entered his guilty plea to an Espionage Act charge on June 26, 2024, in the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands located on the island of Saipan, the capital of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. Territory.

In mid-May 2024, Mr. Shawn N. Anderson, the U.S. Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, met with Chief Judge Manglona in chambers to inform her that there was a very high-profile case involving national security that was about to be filed in this court and that the parties wanted to meet with Chief Judge Manglona virtually to discuss the details. He described it as a case so significant that it would put Saipan on the map to a lot of people globally because it involved an international figure. However, because the case involved international relations and negotiations, the details were confidential until all the necessary parties and countries were informed and in agreement. Chief Judge Manglona learned about the defendant's name at a telephonic conference call with all the attorneys involved a few days later, and they discussed some potential dates for the hearing.

Given the magnitude of the case, Chief Judge Manglona kept everything confidential from everyone else in the courthouse until she received the necessary legal documents and the firm date. On June 18, 2024, she received the confirmation email that a deal was reached, and a draft plea agreement was provided to her. It was based on Rule 11(c)(1)(C) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, making it a binding plea agreement that Chief Judge Manglona must either accept completely or allow a party to withdraw from the agreement if she rejected any portion of it. They then had a second call about the date and logistics to factor in the Australian government's requests, as well as the bail terms set by the U.K. court.

In preparation for the upcoming hearing, Chief Judge Manglona met with an F.B.I. Special Agent who handled international matters. They had to clarify how and where Assange would be entering the courthouse. If he was under arrest pursuant to the outstanding arrest warrant issued by the Eastern District of Virginia,

then Assange would have to be brought in through the back side of the courthouse through the holding cell. If he was not, then Assange was free to enter through the front doors of the courthouse. It turned out to be the latter. A picture taken of Assange entering the courthouse has Chief Judge Manglona's judicial assistant Amanda Hayes, the F.B.I. Special Agent, and the Australian Ambassador to the United States Dr. Kevin Rudd accompanying him and keeping the media at bay made it online on Reuters within minutes of the event.

Because this was a high-profile criminal case, Chief Judge Manglona also had to prepare the entire court staff and security personnel which totaled 35 people. "We are the smallest district court in the country with only ten people in the clerk's office, and four in chambers, including myself. That day, the Court had a temporary summer intern joining us, and the security team consisted of 20 people from the U.S. Marshals Services, Court Security Officers, and Federal Protective Services," said Chief Judge Manglona.

The first order of business addressed was dealing with the press. Assange was the public face of Wikileaks, the website he founded with others as an "intelligence agency of the people." The Court realized that local and international media would seek information immediately and constantly, and it anticipated a packed courtroom.

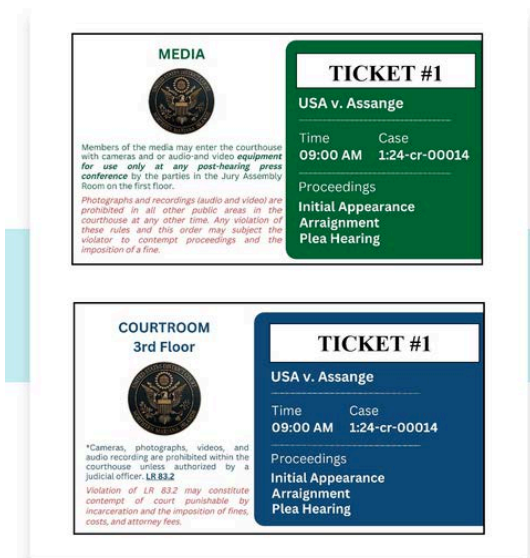
The screenshot shows the official website of the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands. The header features the court's seal and name, along with the names of Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona and Clerk of Court/Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy. The main content area is titled "Criminal Case No. 1:24-cr-00014 USA vs Julian Paul Assange" and includes an update timestamp of 06/28/2024 at 8:13 AM CHST. The page provides case information for journalists and the public, detailing the availability of case records on PACER, audio recordings of the hearing on June 26, 2024, and the public hearing schedule. It also outlines rules for the media, including restrictions on cameras, electronic devices, and broadcasting. A sidebar on the right contains sections for "Latest Updates," "For Attorneys," "For Jurors," and "For the Public," each with a list of relevant links.

Screenshot of the Court's webpage that provided helpful information regarding Julian P. Assange's case.

With the goal of reducing email and phone inquiries, the Clerk's Office created a webpage that provided helpful information and the anticipated FAQs, such as the procedural posture of the case, the proceedings scheduled, the use and restrictions on the use of electronic devices, photographs, and recordings. The webpage was updated periodically based on actual inquiries received. An official court media email was specifically created for this case for all media-related inquiries that were not answered from the webpage. Two courthouse staff were identified as the authorized personnel to respond promptly.

To ensure everyone was aware of the courthouse rules, Chief Judge Manglona issued an order the day before the hearing that specifically addressed media access and had cellphone and camera related rules posted at the courthouse and courtroom entrance for everyone in attendance.

The Court also identified the maximum number of public access for the courtroom at 68 persons, and an overflow room at 72. Keeping in mind the balance of media and public access, the Court considered whether to have the media apply in advance or allow for a first-come, first-seated basis.



TICKET SAMPLES

The Clerks created a special ticket with the case information to track the number of occupants and distinguish media from members of the public for the courtroom and overflow room access. Court staff passed out tickets based on the order that people entered the courthouse. Two rows in the courtroom were reserved exclusively for the media, and the audio recordings were uploaded and made available through PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records) system after the proceedings to allow immediate public availability and reduced administrative time to respond to copies of recording requests.

A typical criminal case would last at least a couple of months to bring in the accused and inform the accused of the charges and the accused's constitutional rights, provide some time for the accused to fully consider the evidence received in discovery and the applicable law, as well as the consequences of being found guilty including the possible sentence to be imposed. However, Assange's case started at 9:15 a.m. with his initial appearance, followed by his arraignment on the Information charging him with one count of Conspiracy to Obtain and Disclose National Defense Information, his change of plea hearing, and, after a thirty-minute recess, concluded at 12 p.m. after Chief Judge Manglona imposed a sentence consistent with the parties' plea agreement.

When Assange landed on Saipan that Wednesday summer morning, he was still under the Westminster Magistrates' court order of release that subjected him to be handed over to the Government of Australia's High Commissioner to the U.K. and be in the High Commissioner's presence until his appearance before Chief Judge Manglona. After Assange entered his guilty plea pursuant to the terms of his plea agreement, and Chief Judge Manglona pronounced sentence of time served, he became a free man. Assange's journey to freedom took years, but it only took hours on Saipan to make it happen.





Confirmation of Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona

Chief Judge Manglona takes the oath of office administered by Chief Judge Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood. Her husband, Associate Justice John A. Manglona, holds the Bible as their children, Savana, Dencio (far right), son-in-law Jalen (far left), and granddaughter Kaia Jay look on.

On April 16, 2024, the U.S. Senate confirmed the nomination of Ramona V. Manglona to serve a second 10-year term as chief judge of the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Senate's vote, 96-2, overwhelmingly supported Chief Judge Manglona, who is the Marianas' first indigenous and first female judge for the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

Chief Judge Manglona took the oath of office administered virtually by District Court of Guam Chief Judge Tydingco-Gatewood on April 22, 2024, before Judge Manglona's family, court staff, and friends at the District Court.

"I am truly grateful to President Biden for this appointment, and to the United States Senate for their bipartisan vote of confidence on my nomination, bestowing on me the privilege and honor to continue serving on the federal judiciary," said Chief Judge Manglona.

President Biden announced his intent to renominate Judge Manglona for a second term in August 2023 and officially transmitted the nomination to the United States Senate on September 6, 2023. The United States Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing in November 2023 and later unanimously supported her nomination.



L-R: Chief Judge Manglona's son, Dencio, husband Associate Justice John A. Manglona, Chief Judge Manglona carrying her granddaughter Kaia Jay, daughter Savana, and son-in-law Jalen.



L-R: CNMI Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja, Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Chief Judge Manglona, Associate Justice John A. Manglona, and Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro.



Chief Judge Manglona is joined by Magistrate Judge Kennedy and district court staff at the swearing-in ceremony.

ESGR Patriot Awards Presentation

U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy, Chief Deputy Clerk William J. Bezzant, and Operations Supervisor Timothy V. Wesley received the Patriot Award for their unwavering support to U.S. Air Force Reservist Justin X. Poon.

Poon, who also serves as case administrator in the federal court, was joined by Guam-CNMI Area Chair Rita A. Sablan, Ed.D., Civilian Aide to the U.S. Secretary of Army Mike Sablan, ESGR Ombudsman Joann Aquino, and Employer Outreach Coordinator Rose Igitol in the simple award rites in the courtroom on March 5, 2024.

The support extended to Poon was not limited to mere words of encouragement; it included actionable measures that significantly eased his dual responsibilities. Chief Deputy Clerk Bezzant took the initiative to research and provide detailed information on the types of leave available to military reservists, demonstrating an in-depth understanding and consideration for Poon's unique situation. This comprehensive support system not only facilitated Poon's seamless transition between his civilian and military roles but also underscored the court staff's commitment to supporting their employees' service to the country.



The event was historic because it was the first nomination made in the CNMI by a servicemember from the U.S. Air Force.

– Rita A. Sablan, Ed.D.
Guam-CNMI Area Chair



District Court for NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona, Chief Deputy Clerk William J. Bezzant, Operations Supervisor Timothy V. Wesley and U.S. Air Force Reserve Senior Airman Justin X. Poon pose for a photo with other members of the court's staff and officials of Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve during an awarding ceremony at the federal courthouse. (Not in photo: Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy.)

Photos Credit: Marianas Variety News Reporter Emmanuel T. Erediano

A Historic Recognition

This event not only celebrated the individual achievements of Chief Judge Manglona, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Chief Deputy Clerk Bezzant, and Operations Supervisor Wesley but also set a commendable precedent for other organizations to follow. Their story becomes a beacon of support and understanding within the professional community in the CNMI. It is a reminder that behind every service member's success lies a network of individuals who recognize the value of their service and are willing to go the extra mile to ensure their well-being.

Annual ESGR Employer Award Ceremony



The 2024 Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Employer Award Ceremony, held on August 29, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Guam, was a momentous occasion dedicated to recognizing the outstanding contributions of employers and volunteers who support the brave men and women serving in the National Guard and Reserve.

The ceremony celebrated the unwavering commitment of organizations that provide invaluable support to military personnel balancing their civilian careers with military duties. Among the award recipients was Chief Judge Manglona, who received the Above and Beyond award. This accolade recognized her exceptional efforts to accommodate and support her employees who also serve in the armed forces. Her leadership exemplifies a profound understanding of the unique challenges faced by service members, showcasing her dedication to both justice and patriotism.



The event brought together community leaders, military representatives, and family members to honor those who have gone above and beyond in fostering a supportive work environment for our nation's defenders. Through heartfelt speeches and personal testimonials, the ceremony highlighted the critical role that employers play in ensuring that service members can fulfill their military obligations while maintaining their careers.

Overall, the 2024 ESGR Employer Award Ceremony not only celebrated individual achievements but also reinforced the vital partnership between the military and civilian sectors in safeguarding the values and freedoms we cherish.

Annual District Conference

On August 24, 2024, the Annual District Conference brought together legal professionals, tech enthusiasts, and ethical advocates under the theme “Elevating AI: Ethics, Evidence, Empowerment.” Held at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, the event fostered dynamic discussions on the intersection of artificial intelligence and the legal field.

This year, the conference covered the following topics:

- Basics of AI
- Cyber Hacks: Protecting Judge and Lawyer Networks from Phishing and Social Engineering Attacks
- Behind the Curtain of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals: Initial Processing and Review, Mediation, Panel Assignments, Motions, Oral Argument, and Petitions for Rehearing and Rehearing En Banc
- Supreme Court Review
- Motions Practice and Trial Advocacy
- Ethics Conversatorio: The Implications of Using AI in Legal Practice

The conference also spotlighted the POWER Act, the acronym for the “Pro Bono Work to Empower and Represent Act of 2018.” The POWER Act is a federal statute requiring District Courts to host an annual event intended to address disturbingly high levels of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking across the country by encouraging pro bono legal assistance to empower survivors of these crimes.



Chief Judge Manglona presented awards to attorneys Steven Pixley and Colin Thompson for their years of service on the CJA Panel.



Reggie Galjour, Circuit Information Security Officer, and Jake McCloud, Cyber Security Specialist, from the Office of the Circuit Executive for the Ninth Circuit presented on the Basics of AI.



L-R: Calvani Deleon Guerrero, Victim Advocacy Program Manager, Karidat; Sonia Camacho, Director of Courts, NMI Judiciary; Jane Mack, Directing Attorney, Micronesian Legal Services; and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.





Law Week Proclamation Signing



On April 26, 2024, community leaders, judges and justices, legal professionals, and residents gathered at the Guma' Hustisia for the official signing of the 2024 Law Week proclamation. This event marked the beginning of Law Week, a time dedicated to celebrating the rule of law and raising awareness about the importance of justice, equality, and civic responsibility.

Law Week is an annual event in the Commonwealth. It is part of a national celebration that dates back to 1958, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower first established a day of national dedication to the principles of government under law. This year's law week theme was "Voices of Democracy."

Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy read and signed the Law Week proclamation along with justices and judges from the NMI Judiciary and Honorable Governor Arnold I. Palacios.



Cake cutting after the proclamation signing. L-R: Magistrate Judge Kennedy; Associate Justice John A. Manglona, Commonwealth Supreme Court; Hon. Arnold I. Palacios, Governor of the CNMI; Chief Judge Manglona; Edith Deleon Guerero, CNMI Senate President; Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro, Commonwealth Supreme Court; Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja, CNMI Superior Court.

Fourth Annual Law Day Photo Contest

In May 2024, the District Court hosted its Fourth Annual Law Day Photo Contest. This year's contest centered around the theme, "Voices of Democracy," which highlights the fundamental principle that in democracies, the people hold the power to govern.

The contest was open to all middle and high school students in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Participants were asked to submit photographs that reflected the theme, accompanied by a brief description explaining how their photo represented the idea of democracy in action. Submissions were judged based on their originality, creativity, and how effectively they captured the essence of the theme.

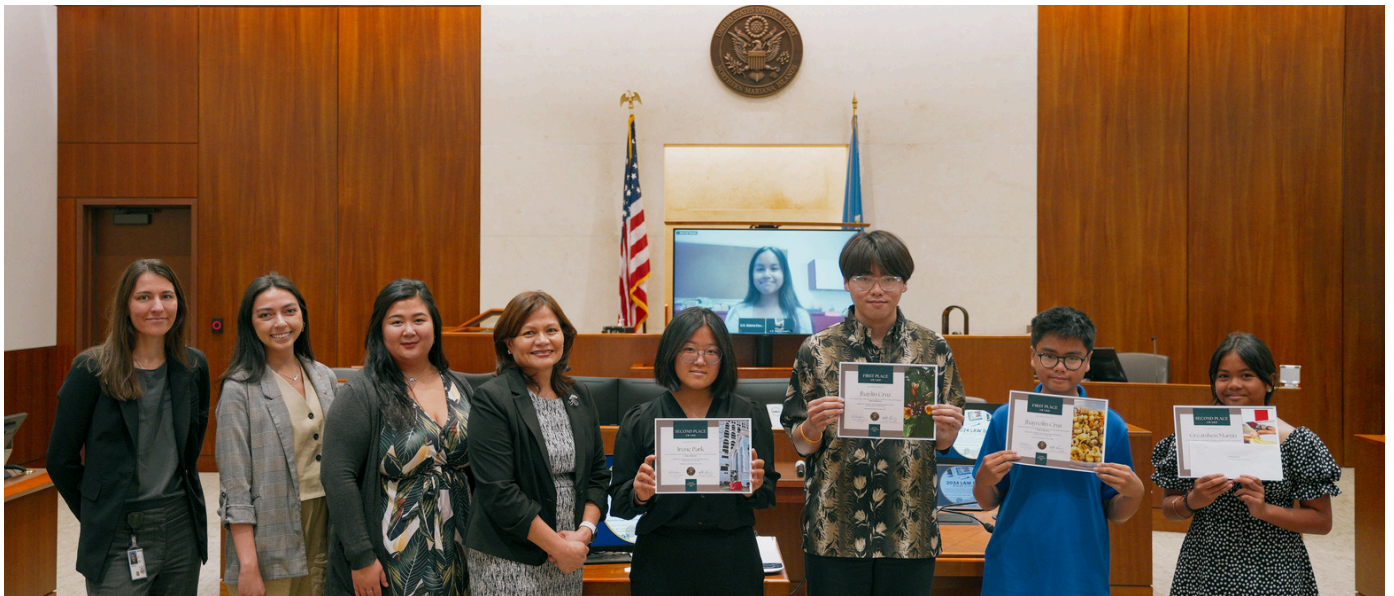
High School:

1st Place – Jhaylin Cruz, Marianas High School
2nd Place – Irene Park, Saipan International School
3rd Place – Sofia Del Rosario, Tinian Jr. Sr. High School

Middle School:

1st Place – Jhayrolin Cruz, Hopwood Middle School
2nd Place – Greatshen Martin, Francisco M. Sablan Middle School

To view the 2024 Law
Day Photo Contest
winners' photos.



All awardees with Chief Judge Manglona and members of the Law Day photo contest judging committee.



Fourth Annual Read Aloud with the Judges

In celebration of law week, Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy participated in their Fourth Annual “Read Aloud with the Judges” event in partnership with the Joeten Kiyu Public Library on May 4, 2024, and May 18, 2024.

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.

The event concluded with a Q&A session, where children asked questions about the judges’ experiences in the courtroom and their journeys to becoming legal professionals. The judges shared their life stories that underscored the significance of justice and integrity, inspiring the young audience to envision themselves as future leaders and advocates for their communities.

As the event wrapped up, each child received a gavel shaped pencil, encouraging them to continue exploring the world of literature and justice. The judges left the library with smiles, knowing they had foster a love of reading and a deeper understanding of the law among the next generation. This outreach event had become the judges’ favorite outreach of the year—a meaningful celebration of Law Week that beautifully illustrated how stories can ignite a passion for change and shape future leaders.

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 2024, the District Court held twelve naturalization ceremonies and swore in 213 individuals from fourteen countries as new citizens. They came from Bangladesh, China, Czech Republic, France, India, Laos, Marshall Islands, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand.



Group photo of Guest Speaker Andrew Ashburn, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Immigration Services Officer Patricia Phelan, and the new citizens on January 16, 2024.



Group photo of Guest Speaker Dr. Galvin Guerrero, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, Immigration Services Officer Patricia Phelan, and the new citizens on February 15, 2024.

Magistrate Judge Kennedy presided over the naturalization ceremony on March 26, 2024, joined by Guest Speaker Pedro A. Tenorio. As he shook each new citizens' hand, Mr. Tenorio genuinely and firmly said: "Welcome".





Photo Credit: U.S. Navy, by Shaina O'Neal

Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Senior Military Official for the CNMI, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Palau, attended April's naturalization ceremony that Chief Judge Manglona presided over. During the ceremony, Rear Adm. Huffman offered remarks and congratulated the new Americans on their citizenship.

"The commitment you make today is especially noteworthy, because here in Saipan, we are thousands of miles away from the continental United States," Huffman said. "It goes to show that our American values ring true and inspire people to seek democracy all around the world."

Guest Speaker Attorney Bruce L. Mailman with Chief Judge Manglona, Immigration Services Officer Phelan, and the seventeen new citizens on May 6, 2024, naturalization ceremony.



On June 13, 2024, the District Court and USCIS welcomed twenty new citizens from four different countries.

During the ceremony, guest speaker Dr. Jonathan V. Liwag, IT Security Officer for the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, offered his remarks: "Moving to this country and leaving my birthplace was a challenge and struggle, but this journey gives me a special appreciation for our new home. Even though we left behind friends, family, and things that we have grown accustomed to. . . we did not leave everything behind: we also brought with us our hopes and dreams, and cultures that enrich American society."





Chief Judge Manglona presided over the naturalization ceremony on July 1, 2024, joined by Designated Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio.

Guest speaker Mr. Michael S. Sablan, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for the Northern Mariana Islands, offered his remarks: “Just as your individual journeys toward citizenship may have had some challenges, the journey toward our islands becoming a Commonwealth was not an easy one. Both involved long processes and challenges along the way. And many uncertainties.”

On August 13, 2024, Designated Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio presided over the naturalization ceremony. During the ceremony, U.S. Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan offered remarks and congratulated the new Americans on their citizenship.



Honorable Lillian A. Tenorio, Associate Judge of the CNMI Superior Court, was the guest speaker for the September naturalization ceremony. Judge Tenorio offered inspiring remarks and congratulated the new Americans on their citizenship.



On October 15, 2024, guest speaker Ms. Andrea Carr from 500 Sails delivered her remarks, and encouraged the new citizens to embrace their roles and responsibilities as members of this great nation. Adding to the special atmosphere of the ceremony, six students from Grace Christian Academy attended the ceremony. These young leaders took the initiative to write personalized welcoming letters, which were given to each new citizen, symbolizing the support and connection of the next generation.



On November 21, 2024, twenty men and women from five nations took the Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America. Rear Adm. Brent DeVore offered remarks and congratulated the new Americans on their citizenship.

“This is the first day of a new chapter in your lives, but you bring with you a vast array of experiences that have shaped who you are today. Now, in taking the oath, you join millions of naturalized citizens who also chose America, and have contributed to our nation’s incredible diversity through sharing their traditions, languages, and perspectives. I hope you do the same.”



Photo Credit: U.S. Navy, by LCDR Tucker.



In celebration of the CNMI Constitution Day, Chief Judge Manglona invited former Governor Benigno R. Fitial to be the guest speaker at the ceremony on December 16, 2024. Governor Fitial shared inspiring remarks that highlighted the importance of U.S. citizenship and the history of the CNMI leaders’ efforts to ensure the naturalization of residents born in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.



Governor Fitial concluded his speech by extending heartfelt congratulations to the new citizens. “Welcome home,” he said, sharing in the pride and joy of the newly naturalized individuals.

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 districts. The 2024 theme was “70 Years Later - The Legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education*.” *Brown v. Board of Education* is widely accepted as one of the most momentous Supreme Court decisions, but views differ regarding the impact it has had on the law and our society. The contest challenged students to address and consider what impact the *Brown* case has had and why.

In all, the Ninth Circuit received 737 essays, and 88 videos. Students throughout the CNMI submitted a total of 40 essays and three videos.

2024 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST

cash prizes!

**70 Years Later—
The Legacy of
BROWN V.
BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

DISTRICT CASH PRIZES
(in both categories)
1st Place: \$300
2nd place: \$150
3rd place: \$100

1st \$3,000
2nd \$1,700
3rd \$1,000

Cash prizes!

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

Entries accepted beginning January 8, 2024. **Deadline for entries is March 8, 2024.**
Sponsored by the United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit.

The essays were returned to the 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.



Awardees with Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.

This year’s district level award ceremony marked a significant evolution from previous years, as it embraced a more inclusive and engaging format. Traditionally, the event focused primarily on recognizing the top three winners in each category, but this year it expanded to honor the top 10 participants in a spectacular celebration of talent and dedication. This change not only highlighted the exceptional work of more individuals but also fostered a sense of community among participants.

The ceremony kicked off with a reception, setting a festive tone for the afternoon. Guests mingled over light refreshments, creating an inviting atmosphere that encouraged networking and conversation. This addition transformed the ceremony into more than just an awards presentation. It became a lively gathering where connections could be made, ideas exchanged, and friendships formed.



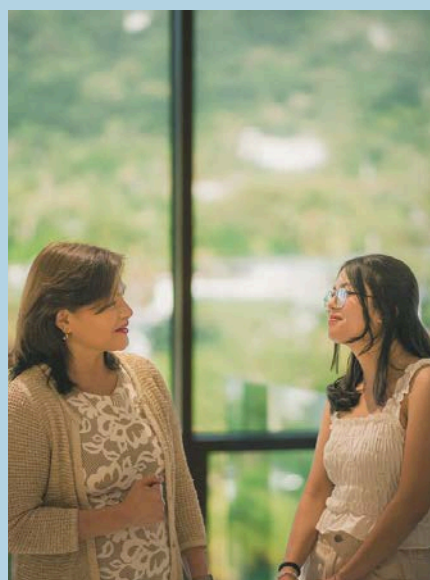
A stand out feature of this year's ceremony was the opportunity for attendees to engage directly with the judges. After the awards were announced, a dedicated segment allowed participants to join in a candid conversation with the judges. This unique interaction provided invaluable insights into the evaluation process, with judges sharing their perspectives on what made the top entries stand out. Participants appreciated the chance to ask questions and receive feedback, enriching their understanding and encouraging their future endeavors.



In conclusion, this year's award ceremony was an engaging event distinct from previous ceremonies. By honoring the top ten participants, providing a reception with light refreshments, and facilitating conversations with the judges, the event fostered a deeper sense of community and connection. Attendees left not only with awards but with newfound relationships and motivation to continue their pursuits. This year set a new standard for future ceremonies, blending recognition with engagement and ensuring that every participant felt valued and inspired.



Irene Park from Saipan International School reads her winning essay.



Trixia Jhoanne Singca from Marianas High School asks Chief Judge Manglona questions after the award ceremony.



Joshua Yoo from Saipan International School, one of the top ten award recipients, poses for a photo with Magistrate Judge Kennedy after the award ceremony.

Winners for the essay contest:

- 1st Place – Irene Park, Saipan International School
 2nd Place – Gwanpil Son, Marianas High School
 3rd Place – Trixia Jhoanne Singca, Marianas High School

Winners for the video contest:

- 1st Place – team of Misha Kim from Saipan International School and Ayung Lee from Mt. Carmel School
 2nd Place – team of Jeongbin Park, Keylie Claveria, and Zi Hao Zhou from Saipan International School
 3rd Place – team of Eva Lizunova, Linda Li, and Nikki Qiu from Saipan International School

The following students received the top ten award in the essay contest:

- Shuang Zhao, Marianas High School
- Jia Ross Nicdao, Marianas High School
- Jhaylin Cruz, Marianas High School
- Dong Hyun Lee, Saipan International School
- Zi Ting Wu, Saipan International School
- Moshe Sikkell, Saipan International School
- Joshua Yoo, Saipan International School



Essay contest 1st Place winner, Irene Park, posed for a photo with her mother, her teacher, Ms. Stacia Beiniks, Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



Essay contest 2nd Place winner, Gwanpil Son, posed for a photo with his mother and brother, Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



Video contest winners. L-R: Chief Judge Manglona; 3rd place – team of Eva Lizunova, Linda Li, and Nikki Qiu from Saipan International School; 1st place – team of Misha Kim from Saipan International School and Ayung Lee from Mt. Carmel School; 2nd place – team of Jeongbin Park, Keylie Claveria, and Zi Hao Zhou from Saipan International School; and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



Essay contest 3rd Place winner, Trixia Jhoanne Singca, posed for a photo with her mother, Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.

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.

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.



San Vicente Elementary School, with the largest group at ninety-four students, visited the Courthouse on May 3, 2024.

In 2024, the court tours program continued to serve as an invaluable educational initiative, allowing students to gain firsthand insight into the judicial system. These tours not only enhance students' understanding of court proceedings but also provide them with the unique opportunity to interact with key figures in the legal community.

Throughout the year, numerous court tours were organized for local schools and community groups. The program aimed to demystify the court system and encourage students to engage with the legal process. Participants included elementary to high school students, foreign exchange students, youth organizations, and college groups, all eager to learn more about the workings of the judiciary.



Marianas High School students gathered for a group photo with Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



Oleai Elementary School students gathered for a group photo with Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



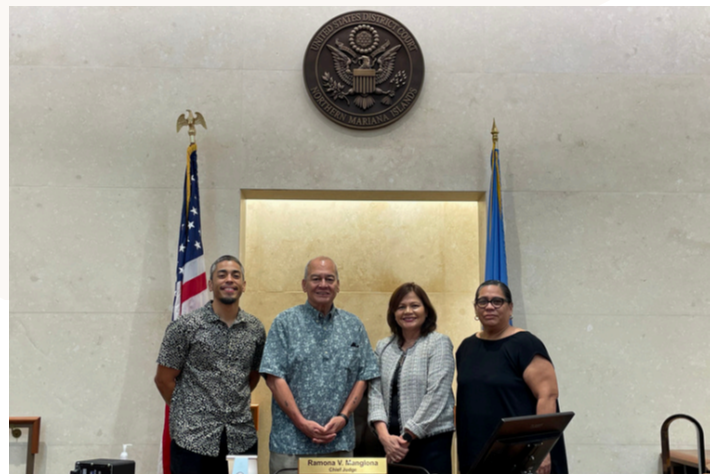
Students from NMC's Camp PROA gathered for a group photo with Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



5th and 6th graders from Mt. Carmel School gathered for a group photo with Chief Judge Manglona and Magistrate Judge Kennedy.



L-R: USCIS Officer Patricia Phelan, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, USCIS Associate Director Anna Chau, and USCIS Guam Field Office Director Rebecca Maliuwelur.



U.S. Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan and his office staff gathered for a group photo with Chief Judge Manglona.

Key Highlights

1. Meeting the Judges



Visitors had the opportunity to meet Chief Judge Manglona, who shared insights into the responsibilities of leading the court and emphasized the importance of an independent judiciary.



Magistrate Judge Kennedy provided an overview of her role in managing preliminary matters and facilitating efficient court operations, offering students a glimpse into the day-to-day workings of the court.



Designated Judge Carter educated visitors about the U.S. judiciary system and answered questions about the U.S. legal system.

2. Engagement with U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Officers

The officers discussed their critical role in monitoring individuals on pretrial and supervised release, explaining how they support rehabilitation and ensure community safety. This interaction highlighted the importance of the balance between accountability and social services within the judicial system.



3. Interactions with U.S. Marshals

U.S. Marshals provided an engaging presentation about their duties, including courtroom security and the transportation of federal prisoners. They also showcased the equipment that may be used when executing a mission. Students were fascinated by the stories shared and gained an appreciation for the critical role of law enforcement in the judicial process.



4. Insights from the U.S. Attorney and Assistant U.S. Attorneys

The U.S. Attorney and Assistant U.S. Attorneys addressed students about the prosecutorial process and the ethical considerations involved in seeking justice. This session sparked discussions about the balance between law enforcement and civil rights, deepening students' understanding of democracy and the Constitution.



L-R: U.S. Attorney Shawn N. Anderson, Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric O'Malley, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Albert S. Flores, Jr.



The court tours program in 2024 successfully fostered a greater appreciation for the judicial system among students. By meeting influential legal professionals, participants gained valuable insights into the workings of the court and the various roles within it.

Moving forward, the Court aims to expand the program to reach even more students and to continue promoting engagement with the legal community. The positive feedback received from participants underscores the program's importance in shaping informed and engaged students and citizens.

The Court looks forward to continuing this important initiative and building on the successes of 2024 in the years to come.

Red Ribbon Campaign

The Red Ribbon Campaign began in 1985 as a heartfelt response to the tragic murder of DEA agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena by drug traffickers in Mexico City. In his memory, friends and community members began wearing red satin ribbons, symbolizing their stand against drug abuse.

Today, the Red Ribbon Campaign has evolved into a leading initiative promoting a drug-free lifestyle, with the red ribbon serving as a modern symbol of resistance against illegal drugs. Its purpose is twofold: to raise awareness about the risks associated with substance abuse and to foster environments where young people can thrive without the influence of drugs.

The campaign is dedicated to nurturing the full potential of youth by creating a supportive, drug-free culture. Each year, during Red Ribbon Week (October 23-31), millions of people across the country participate in events and activities designed to educate, inspire, and empower young people to make healthy choices.

Sponsored by National Family Partnership



On October 1, 2024, Magistrate Judge Kennedy, U.S. Probation Officer Arriola, and Inspirational Speaker Sharee Joyner visited Garapan Elementary School.



On October 16, 2024, Chief Judge Manglona, U.S. Probation Officer David-Atalig, and Inspirational Speaker Sharee Joyner visited Marianas High School.



Magistrate Judge Kennedy led the Drug-Free Pledge after the presentation at William S. Reyes Elementary School on October 22, 2024.



Magistrate Judge Kennedy and Inspirational Speaker Sharee Joyner presented at Francisco M. Sablan Middle School on October 28, 2024.

The District Court organized interactive presentations at various schools, where the Court educated students about the effects of drugs and the importance of making healthy choices. Our team emphasized the value of resilience and peer support, using engaging multimedia content and personal stories to connect with the students. We encouraged open discussions, allowing students to ask questions and express their thoughts, fostering a safe environment for dialogue.



On October 23, 2024, Chief Judge Manglona and U.S. Probation Officer David-Atalig visited Saipan Southern High School.

To further promote the campaign, we hosted a Red Ribbon Gate/Wall Decorating Contest among participating schools. Each school was invited to creatively decorate their campuses with red ribbons and other anti-drug messages. This initiative not only enhanced school spirit but also sparked conversations about drug prevention among students, staff, and parents. Winners were selected based on creativity and the impactful nature of their messages, with prizes awarded to the top three entries.



Students from Saipan Southern High School along with Arisa Sakai-Peters, Vice Principal, and Joe Weaver, art teacher, gathered with Chief Judge Manglona, U.S. Probation Officer David-Atalig, and Case Administrator Justin Poon for a photo after receiving their first place trophy and cash award.



Golden Harvest International School & Daycare won second place this year. Three of their students and two teachers gathered with Chief Judge Manglona, U.S. Probation Officer David-Atalig, and Case Administrator Justin Poon for a photo during the award ceremony.



Sinapalo Elementary School appeared virtually at the Red Ribbon Gate/Wall Decorating Contest Award Ceremony, and received their third place certificate and cash award.

The Red Ribbon Campaign not only educated students about the dangers of drug abuse but also fostered a sense of community and collective responsibility. The engaging presentations and the decorating contest served to inspire students and faculty alike to stand together for a drug-free future. We look forward to continuing this important work in the coming years, creating a lasting impact on our community.



To view the 2024 Red Ribbon Gate/Wall Decorating Contest winners' entry.

Staffing Updates



In April 2024, Systems & Network Administrator, Bernard Paraiso, was recognized with a milestone service pin award for ten years of dedication and service at the District Court.

This year, several individuals were recognized for their dedication and service. A number of staff members were honored with milestone service pin awards, celebrating their commitment and hard work over the years. These individuals have demonstrated exceptional dedication and professionalism, making significant contributions to the Court's operations. Their accomplishments were acknowledged with appreciation, marking a special moment in their careers.

Additionally, the Court had the privilege of hosting two interns who spent a few months contributing to various departments. Their internships provided valuable hands-on experience in the legal field, and the Court was grateful for their hard work and fresh perspectives. As their internships concluded, the Court expressed appreciation for their dedication and enthusiasm, wishing them the best in their future endeavors.



Michel A. Li, Law Clerk, started working with the District Court in September 2024. Michel was sworn in virtually by Chief Judge Manglona in April 2024 before her arrival to Saipan.

In a bittersweet moment, one of the Court's law clerks, Pamela Huynh, completed her two-year term. Throughout her tenure, she was an integral part of the team, offering exceptional support to the judicial process. The Court thanked her for her outstanding contributions, and colleagues shared their gratitude for her professionalism and intellectual rigor.

The Court also welcomed a new law clerk, Michel A. Li, who was sworn in in April 2024. Michel brings fresh talent and energy to the team, and the Court looks forward to her contributions in supporting the judicial work and assisting in various legal matters.

Finally, the Court bid farewell to court reporter Heidi Doogan, who relocated to Florida after four years of service. Heidi's skillful transcription and meticulous attention to detail have been essential in preserving the integrity of the Court's proceedings. Judges and staff members gathered to bid her farewell and express their gratitude for her dedication to the Court throughout the years.



In May 2024, the Court hosted a farewell luncheon for Court Reporter Heidi Doogan at Angry Penne.



In April 2024, staff celebrated the 2024 Administrative Professionals' Day lunch at Casa Urashima.



Anastasiia "Nastya" Shamanaeva interned with the District Court from August 2023 to June 2024. She now attends University of California, Irvine.



Camille Waechter interned with the District Court from April to June in 2024. She is now in her second year at Notre Dame Law School.



Pamela Huynh, Law Clerk, ended her two-year term with the District Court in September 2024.



In October 2024, Information Systems Manager, Glenn Mendoza, was recognized with a milestone service pin award for twenty-five years of commitment and dedication at the District Court.



In December 2024, Judicial Chambers Administrator, Amanda Hayes (second from left), was recognized with a milestone service pin award for twenty years of commitment and dedication at the District Court.

Training & Development



On August 27, 2024, the District Court staff participated in a Professional Development Day, featuring cultural presentations and a series of workshops on effective communication, leadership development, and personal well-being. This dedicated day of learning and team-building allowed staff members to strengthen their professional skills, collaborate with colleagues, and gain valuable cultural insights to improve their overall performance and contribute to a more efficient and supportive work environment.

On October 25, 2024, the District Court staff participated in their annual IT Security Training, facilitated by IT Security Officer Dr. Jonathan Liwag. The training covered a range of essential topics, including creating strong passwords, identifying phishing attempts, implementing multifactor authentication, ensuring timely software updates, and responsibly using AI. Additionally, the session emphasized the importance of reporting IT security incidents to maintain a secure and protected work environment. This comprehensive training aimed to equip staff with the knowledge and tools necessary to safeguard sensitive information and prevent cyber threats.



On November 4, 2024, the District Court staff took part in an Active Shooter training session, led by Federal Protective Service Inspector Michael Atoigue and U.S. Marshals Chief Deputy Tanya Muna. The training provided essential information and practical guidance on responding to active shooter situations, emphasizing safety protocols, situational awareness, and effective coordination during emergencies. This important session aimed to enhance preparedness and ensure the safety of all personnel within the courthouse.





Community Engagements & Other Events



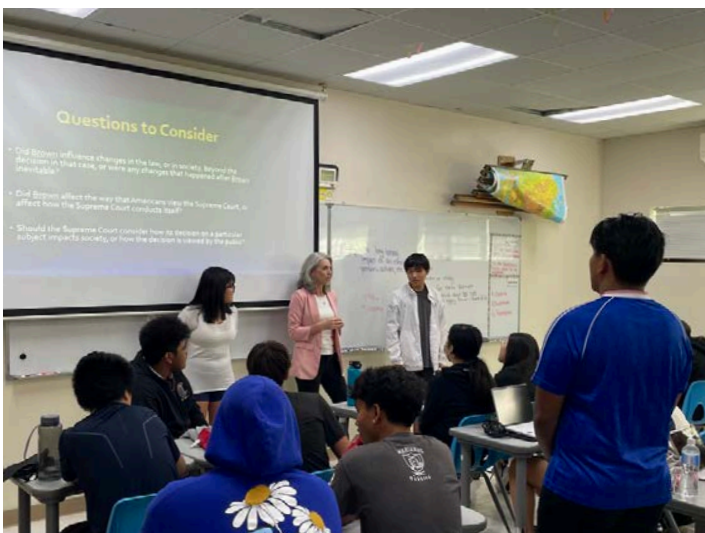


01 Chief Judge Manglona visited Marianas High School on January 5, 2024, and delivered a civics education presentation to 120 students. Chief Judge Manglona explained how civics education empowers individuals by illuminating how laws are made, how courts function, and how they can take part in civic life to effect positive change. It's more than just learning about the Constitution; it's about appreciating how the justice system upholds fairness, resolves disputes, and ensures that all voices are heard. Chief Judge Manglona also promoted the 2024 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest during her visit.



02 On January 5, 2024, Chief Judge Manglona delivered a civics education presentation to 57 students at Kagman High School.

During the session, Chief Judge Manglona explained the importance of understanding the U.S. legal system and the role of the judiciary in upholding justice. The presentation aimed to inspire students to become more involved in civic life and appreciate the democratic principles that shape their country. Following the presentation, Chief Judge Manglona promoted the 2024 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest, encouraging the students to participate and explore their creativity while deepening their knowledge of civics and the law.



03 On January 8, 2024, Magistrate Judge Kennedy visited Saipan International School to engage with students and deliver an informative presentation to Ms. Stacia Beiniks' class. During the visit, Magistrate Judge Kennedy facilitated a mock detention hearing with students taking on the roles of judge, lawyers, and defendants. Following the presentation, Magistrate Judge Kennedy took the opportunity to promote the 2024 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest, encouraging students to participate.



04 On January 30, 2024, Chief Judge Manglona visited Da'Ok Academy, where she delivered an engaging civics education presentation to the students. During her visit, she shared valuable insights about the judicial system, the importance of democracy, and the role of the courts in upholding the law. Chief Judge Manglona also answered a variety of questions asked by the students, offering real-world examples to help illustrate complex concepts in a relatable way. Her interactive session provided students with a deeper understanding of civics and inspired them to actively engage in their community and the democratic process.



05 On February 24, 2024, Designated Judge David O. Carter visited Da'Ok Academy during his time on the island to preside over the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation case, 1:08-cv-00051. The visit provided a valuable opportunity for Designated Judge Carter to connect with students and share insights into the legal process and the role of the judiciary in the community. Designated Judge Carter took the time to answer questions from the students, offering them a deeper understanding of the law and its impact on daily life. His visit not only highlighted the importance of civics education but also strengthened the connection between the judiciary and the local community.



06 On March 11, 2024, the District Court and the Commonwealth Superior Court celebrated Women's Month with Marianas

High School students through an open panel discussion about the legal profession with leading women. This event aimed to enhance and promote diversity in the legal profession and highlighted the stories of women with diverse backgrounds.

Twenty judiciary professionals who are women shared their experience with the students. And for the first time, three women judges from the NMI shared the stage to discuss their journeys and offer advice to youth interested in the field.



07 On March 13, 2024, Chief Judge Manglona, accompanied by Associate Justice John A. Manglona from the Commonwealth Supreme Court, visited Hopwood Middle School to connect with students through an educational judiciary presentation. The visit aimed to provide students with valuable insights into the workings of the judicial system, helping them understand the role of judges and justices and the importance of law in society. The presentation was an interactive session where the students had the opportunity to ask questions and learn directly from these esteemed legal professionals, enhancing their understanding of justice and the law.



08 On May 6, 2024, Hopwood Middle School held its Student Council Induction Ceremony at World Resort Saipan. During the event, Chief Judge Manglona not only swore in the Student Council Officers but also delivered an inspiring speech, emphasizing the importance of integrity, responsibility, and teamwork in leadership. The ceremony marked the beginning of the officers' roles in serving their school community, as they took an oath to serve their peers with dedication and respect.



09 On September 17, 2024, the Court hosted a comprehensive Westlaw training session led by Joe Amos, Esq., providing valuable insights for legal professionals looking to enhance their research skills. The event offered one Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit. This year's session included a timely update on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Westlaw. Amos introduced attendees to the latest AI-driven tools within the platform, demonstrating how these innovations can enhance legal research efficiency and accuracy.



10 Dr. Liwag, the Court's IT Security Officer, conducted a cybersecurity awareness presentation at Saipan Southern School on October 18, 2024, aiming to equip students with the essential knowledge and skills to navigate the digital world safely. Throughout the session, Dr. Liwag emphasized the importance of protecting personal information, recognizing phishing attempts, and maintaining strong passwords. He used real-world examples to highlight the growing threats of cyberattacks and encouraged students to adopt proactive measures, such as enabling two factor authentication and regularly updating their software.



11 On November 20, 2024, Chief Judge Manglona met with Security Management Branch Chief Salvador Lujan, and Inspector Michael Atoigue from the Federal Protective Service to discuss ongoing security measures and coordination efforts. The meeting focused on enhancing safety protocols within the courthouse and ensuring effective communication between the judiciary and federal security teams.



12 On December 6, 2024, Marianas High School seniors Julia Taitano and Jia Nicdao won the 2024 High School Moot Court competition, defeating thirty other students from MHS, Saipan International School, and Mount Carmel School. The students were put to the test by a panel of distinguished judges, including Commonwealth Supreme Court Associate Justices John A. Manglona and Perry Inos, along with Chief Judge Manglona. The judges challenged the students with complex legal questions based on a fictional case, simulating the kind of inquiries real attorneys would face in court. The students showcased impressive legal knowledge and advocacy skills, making the competition a memorable display of future legal talent.

U.S. Probation & Pretrial Services Office



STAFFING



The Probation and Pretrial Services Office had an unprecedented amount of staff transitions. In October 2024, Frank J. Lizama (back row second from the right on the photo) retired as the Budget Analyst for the office. He was days shy of twenty-five years of service. Frank brought his best to the job everyday, and we thank him for his service.



The office was fortunate to fill Frank's position with Shirlene Guerrero (second from the left on the photo) who transferred from the District Court of Guam. The transfer was a promotion from a Financial Administrator to the position of Budget and Human Resources Officer. Shirlene has served the District Court of Guam for over 20 years with distinction. She will continue to oversee the District of Guam's finance division.

The growth of the office continued with the addition of three new probation officers, Aysha Roberto, Roquel Cendana and Vincent Reyes. All three come with years of experience in the Judiciary of Guam (JOG) Probation Office. Officer Aysha Roberto worked in the community supervision field for eleven years before joining the probation office. She recently returned to Guam from the National Training Academy in South Carolina where she was awarded top honors in her class, she earned the Academic Award, the Officer Safety Award, and the Director's Leadership Award. She has the distinction of joining only ten other students in the history of the Academy who have won that many awards. Of those ten she shared the distinction with her colleague, USPO Specialist Trina Duenas.

Officer Roquel Cendana is no stranger to the probation office where she previously worked in a volunteer capacity, then the office's first paid student intern while earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice. After graduation, she began her career as a Probation Officer with the JOG in the Drug Treatment Court for first time offenders.

Officer Vincent Reyes comes to probation with over ten years of experience at JOG's Probation Office. He has experience working in the Adult Drug Unit, Juvenile Probation, and the Mental Health Court.



L-R: USPO Chief Kim Walmsley, Chief Judge Tydingco-Gatewood, USPO Roquel C. Cendana, USPO Vincent P. Reyes, USPO Aysha T. Roberto, Chief Judge Manglona, and Judiciary of Guam Chief Probation Officer (former USPO Chief) Rossanna Villagomez-Aguon.



In December 2024, the office bid farewell to three valued team members. Probation Officer Lee John San Nicolas resigned his position in anticipation of moving off-island. Lee began his career in July 2016 while also serving in the Guam Army National Guard. He served in the supervision unit and specialized in location monitoring of defendants and persons under supervision.

Later in December 2024, the office also bid farewell to Sentencing Guidelines Specialist Jeffrey Ventura, who will transfer to the District of Nevada. Jeffrey started his career as a probation clerk in 2009 and was promoted to probation officer two years later. After 15 years of dedicated service, the office thank Jeffrey for his contributions and wish him the best in his new role.

Additionally, the office sent well wishes to student intern Kirryn Damian, who served for over three years. Kirryn took on to a new opportunity at a local law firm, and we wish her continued success as she expands her horizons.



The Probation and Pretrial Services Office is thankful for all who have served. We look forward to the growth opportunities presented with the new employees.

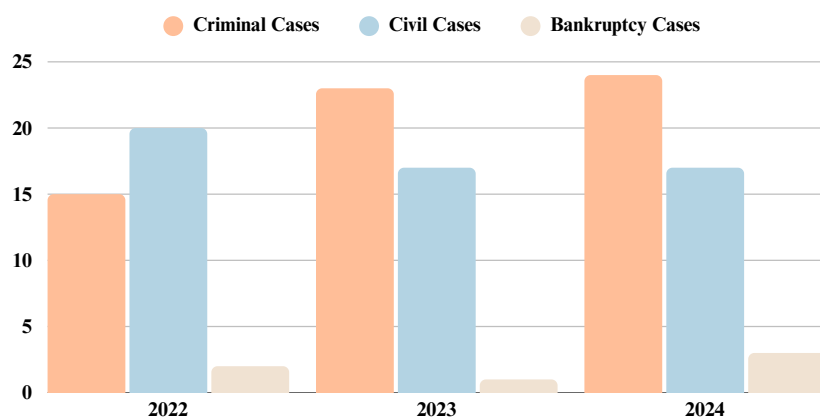
TRAINING

From September 3, 2024 through September 5, 2024, staff from the Probation and Pretrial Services Office and U.S. Marshals Service participated in the Knife Control Concepts course. Training was provided by Aaron Jannetti, an author and experienced martial arts practitioner with a background in Krav Maga, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Wrestling, Boxing, and Kickboxing. Along with Mr. Jannetti was Eli Knight, a third degree Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu black belt under Royce Gracie. the three day course provided training on dynamic techniques which can be employed when an individual is faced with a knife attack where safe retreat is not an option. The course focused on getting to positions that will allow the person to control the attacker, while minimizing the risk of injury and increasing the chance of survival. The training proved to be challenging while still being a fun, team-building experience.

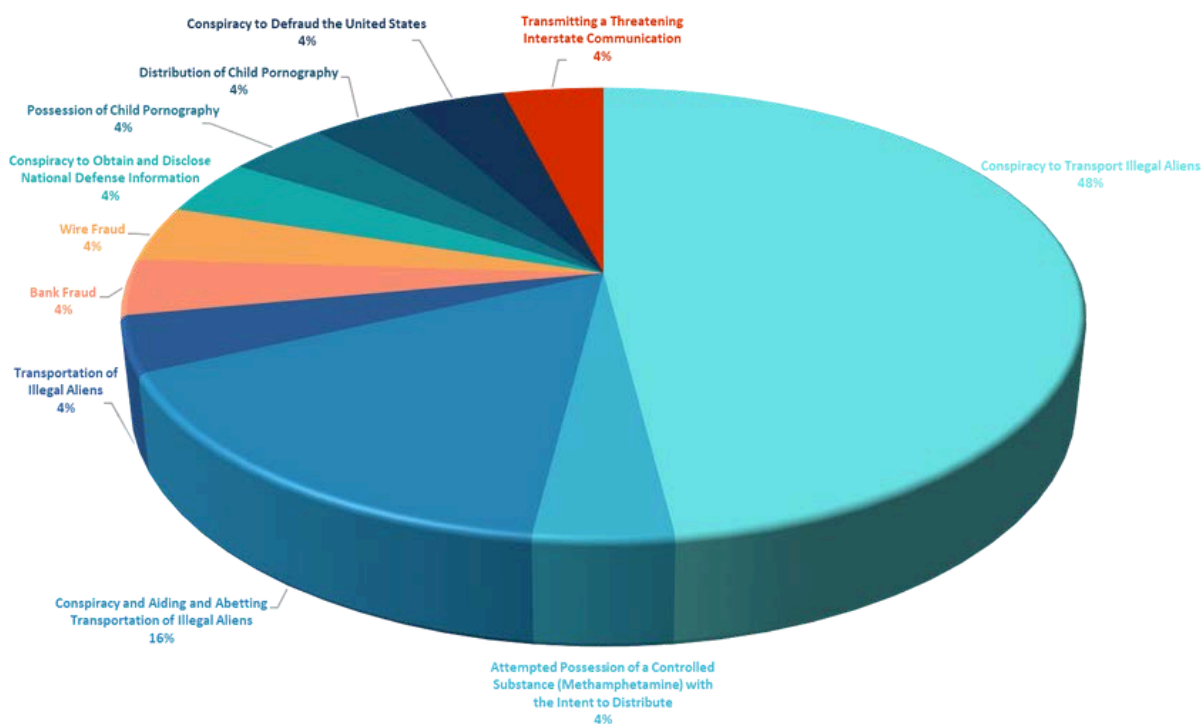




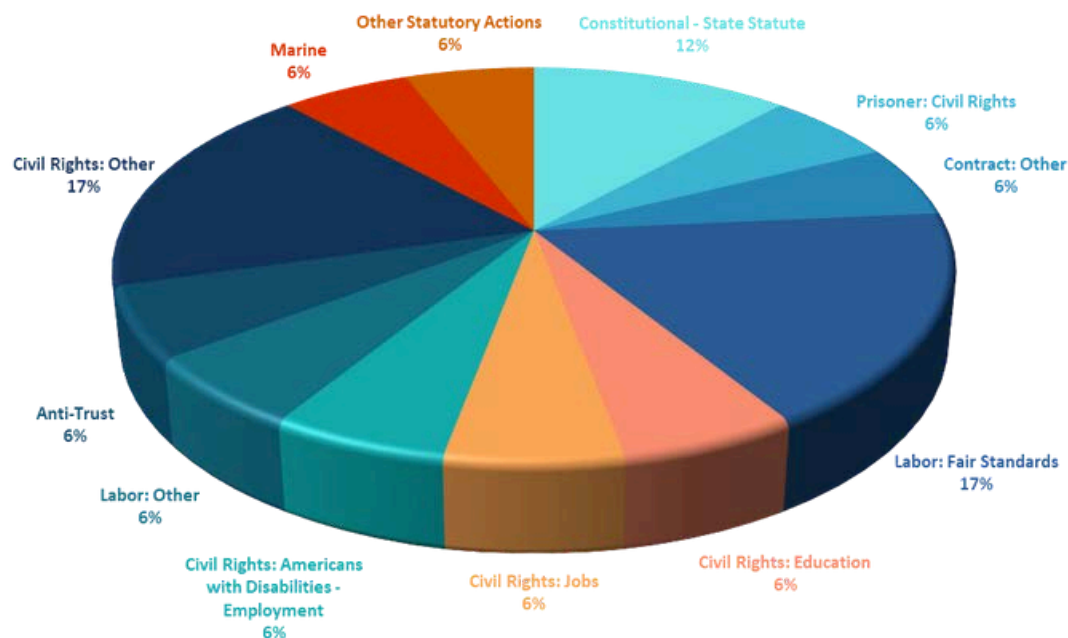
Case Statistics



2024 Criminal Cases - Nature of Suit



2024 Civil Cases - Nature of Suit



Cover Photo:

U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands bathed in the warm light of sunset, symbolizing justice at day's end.

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



**United States District Court
for the Northern Mariana Islands**
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