



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Confirms Judge Holly A. Thomas to Seat on U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

SAN FRANCISCO – The United States Senate today voted 48-40 to confirm President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.’s, nomination of Superior Court Judge Holly A. Thomas to serve as a U.S. circuit judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Judge Thomas was nominated for the judgeship on Sept. 20, 2021, and had her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Oct. 20, 2021. Upon the president’s signing of her judicial commission, Judge Thomas will occupy a seat made vacant by Circuit Judge William A. Fletcher’s assumption of senior status.

Judge Thomas was appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. as a judge on the California Superior Court for the County of Los Angeles in 2018. She previously served, from 2016 to 2018, as the deputy director of executive programs at the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, the nation’s largest state civil rights agency. She was appointed to that position by Governor Brown in 2016.

From 2015 to 2016, Judge Thomas served as a special counsel to the solicitor general at the New York State Attorney General’s Office. Prior to that, she spent five years as a senior attorney in the Appellate Section of the Civil Rights Division at the United States Department of Justice. She also served, from 2005 to 2010, as an assistant counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., where she was an Arthur Liman Fellow from 2005 to 2006. Judge Thomas served as a law clerk for the Honorable Kim McLane Wardlaw on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 2004 to 2005.

Judge Thomas is a recipient of the 2008 New York City Bar Association Thurgood Marshall Award for Capital Representation; and, from the U.S. Department of Justice, the 2012 Special Commendation for Outstanding Service in the Civil Rights Division; 2013 Attorney

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General's Award for Distinguished Service; 2014 Attorney General's Award for Exceptional Service, the Department's highest award for employee performance; and the 2015 John Marshall Award for Providing Legal Advice.

Born in San Diego, California, Judge Thomas received her bachelor's degree, with honors and distinction, in political science and African and African American studies from Stanford University in 2000; and her Juris Doctor in 2004 from Yale Law School, where she was an essays editor of the Yale Law Journal.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit had 9,487 new filings in fiscal year 2021 ending September 30. All 29 authorized judgeships are currently filled.

Appointed under Article III of the U.S. Constitution, federal circuit court judges are nominated by the president, confirmed by the Senate and serve lifetime appointments upon good behavior.

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