



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

**PRESS RELEASE**

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Date: November 7, 2023

**SENATE CONFIRMS MAGISTRATE JUDGE KENLY KIYA KATO  
AS UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

On November 7, 2023, the United States Senate confirmed President Joe Biden's nomination of Magistrate Judge Kenly Kiya Kato to serve as a federal district judge for the United States District Court for the Central District of California. Judge Kato will preside over matters in Riverside in the Court's Eastern Division.

Judge Kato has been a magistrate judge for the Central District of California since 2014, sitting in the Court's Eastern Division. As a magistrate judge, she has maintained a civil and criminal docket that includes state and federal habeas petitions, civil rights matters where the plaintiff is not represented by counsel, Social Security disability appeals, discovery proceedings and settlement conferences in civil cases, trial and disposition of select civil cases upon consent of the parties, preliminary proceedings in felony matters, and all proceedings in misdemeanor matters upon consent of the parties. In addition to her civil and criminal docket, Judge Kato is a member of the Court's CASA (Conviction and Sentence Alternatives Program) and STAR (Substance Abuse Treatment and Reentry Program) Teams. CASA and STAR are collaborative courts where teams composed of judicial officers, pretrial and probation officers, federal prosecutors and federal public defenders work together to address the underlying issues and needs of individuals charged with federal crimes. Both programs offer a pathway for offenders to attain rehabilitation and become contributing members of the community and are models for criminal justice reform.

Prior to her appointment as a magistrate judge, from 2004 to 2014, Judge Kato maintained her own private practice focused primarily on federal criminal defense work. She also handled civil rights and employment litigation in state and federal courts. In addition, Judge Kato was also an attorney on the Court's Criminal Justice Act panel, and assisted the Court as a member of the Merit Selection Panel and Attorney Discipline Committee.

Before entering private practice, from 1997 to 2003, Judge Kato served in the Federal Public Defender's Office for the Central District of California. As a Deputy Federal Public Defender, Judge Kato represented hundreds of clients charged with a broad range of federal offenses. She handled all aspects of criminal proceedings, including arraignments, motion hearings, bench and jury trials, and sentencing hearings. She also briefed and argued cases before the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Throughout her career, Judge Kato has been involved in several bar and judges' associations, including the Federal Bar Association in which she serves as a Board Member and the Asian Pacific

American Lawyers of the Inland Empire which awarded her the Justice Stephen K. Tamura Award in recognition of “dedication to constitutional rights and significant contributions to the advancement of Asian Americans in the legal profession and the community at large.”

Judge Kato received her Bachelor of Arts degree, *summa cum laude*, from University of California, Los Angeles, in 1993, and her Juris Doctor degree, *cum laude*, from Harvard Law School in 1996. Following law school, Judge Kato clerked for the Honorable Robert M. Takasugi of the Central District of California.

Judge Kato fills the vacancy that arose when District Judge Beverly Reid O’Connell passed away in October 2017. Including the appointment of Judge Kato, the Central District of California has 28 authorized Article III judgeships, two of which are currently unfilled. The Central District of California is comprised of the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. It serves more than 19.3 million people, nearly half the population of the State of California.

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**KIRY K. GRAY**  
**DISTRICT COURT EXECUTIVE / CLERK OF COURT**