



PRESS RELEASE
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DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT WELCOMES NEW MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Maria Eugenia Garcia, a private attorney with a background in civil litigation, has been selected by the Board of Judges for the District of Connecticut as a Magistrate Judge. She will be sworn in on June 3, 2022, and will be resident at the New Haven federal courthouse. Ms. Garcia fills the magistrate judge vacancy created by the elevation of Judge Sarah A. L. Merriam from magistrate judge to district judge on October 8, 2021.

Ms. Garcia was a *summa cum laude* graduate of Tufts University in May 2004. In 2007, she received her Juris Doctor from The George Washington University Law School. Prior to her appointment, from 2018 to 2022, she represented individuals and small businesses in all aspects of employment litigation at her own boutique law firm, MGQ Law, LLC, in Westport. From 2013 to 2018, she practiced employment and civil rights litigation at Mitchell and Sheahan P.C. (2015-2018) and at the Law Offices of Lewis A. Chimes (2013-2015). From 2007-2010, she worked as a litigation associate at Pullman & Comley, P.C.

Ms. Garcia served as a law clerk to the Honorable Holly B. Fitzsimmons, United States Magistrate Judge for the District of Connecticut from May 2010 through September 2013, and as an interim law clerk to the late Honorable Warren W. Eginton, Senior United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut in the fall of 2009.

Stefan R. Underhill, Chief United States District Judge, described Ms. Garcia as “deeply committed to justice. As a private attorney she has real world experience representing individuals and businesses in court. We are excited to welcome her to the ranks of judicial officers in our District.”

The District Judges appointed the Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panel that screened applications for the vacancy created by Judge Merriam’s elevation. Its Chair, Timothy Fisher, is the former Dean and current professor at the University of Connecticut School of Law in Hartford. Other members of the Merit Selection Panel were: Kelly M. Barrett of the Office of Federal Public Defender in New Haven; Timothy Diemand of Wiggin & Dana LLP in New Haven; the Honorable Maria del Pilar Gonzalez, Connecticut Superior Court Judge; Toni Harp, former mayor of the City of New Haven; Gary Scott Klein of Carmody Torrance Sandak & Hennessey, LLP in Stamford; Ivan J. Ladd-Smith of Spears Manning & Martini LLC in Southport; Dr. Elsa Núñez, President of Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic; Jill M. O’Toole of O’Toole & O’Toole PLLC in Hartford; Craig A. Raabe of Iazard, Kindall & Raabe LLP in West Hartford; and Alina Marquez Reynolds of Grace Farms Foundation in New Canaan.

The Merit Selection Panel received 42 applications for the judicial position following wide dissemination of the notice of vacancy. The applicants were a tremendously diverse group. The Committee interviewed eight applicants and identified a list of five exceptionally capable and distinguished lawyers to forward to the District Judges.

“The committee was deeply impressed by Attorney Garcia’s breadth of experience, her energy and her leadership ability. She has earned praise from all who have dealt with her and brings both great knowledge of the workings of the federal courts and a deep understanding of parties’ experiences with the justice system. Attorney Garcia will be a great addition to the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut,” said Timothy Fisher, as Chair of the Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panel.

Magistrate judges are federal trial court judges who are appointed to the court for eight-year terms. They play a vital role in the work of the federal courts by assisting the district judges in a variety of pretrial and preliminary matters. The authority exercised by a magistrate judge is delegated to the magistrate judge by the court’s district judges under governing statutory authority and local rules of court.

There are five active magistrate judges and four recalled magistrate judges on the Connecticut bench.

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