



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT

Robin Tabora: (203) 773-2140

FORMER PROSECUTOR SWORN IN AS NEW MAGISTRATE JUDGE

S. Dave Vatti, a former Assistant United States Attorney, has been selected as a Magistrate Judge for the District of Connecticut. He was sworn in on March 22, 2021, and he will be resident at the Bridgeport federal courthouse. Mr. Vatti fills the magistrate judge vacancy created by the retirement of Magistrate Judge William I. Garfinkel, effective on February 26, 2021.

Mr. Vatti is a lifelong resident of Connecticut, leaving only to attend Columbia University in New York, where he received his B.A. in 1989. He returned to Connecticut and earned his J.D. from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1992. While in law school, he served as a Notes and Comments Editor of the Connecticut Journal of International Law. He was a long-time member of the UConn Law School Alumni Association Board of Directors and served as its President in 2003.

After graduating from law school, Mr. Vatti began practicing at the Bridgeport, Connecticut firm of Zeldes, Needle & Cooper, P.C., first as an associate (1992-1999) and later as partner (2000-2001). At that firm, he concentrated in the areas of commercial, employment, and tort litigation in both state and federal courts. He then spent two years as a solo practitioner in Shelton, Connecticut from 2001 to 2003.

In 2004, Mr. Vatti joined the Office of the United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Criminal Division. From 2004 to 2021, he conducted investigations and prosecutions of violent crime matters and interstate drug-trafficking organizations. From June 2013 to 2021, Mr. Vatti served as Chief of the Violent Crime and Narcotics Unit, where he oversaw thirteen prosecutors as well as all prosecutions and investigations within the unit. During that time, he also oversaw the development and implementation of the Career Pathways Collaborative. Career Pathways is a partnership between the U.S. Attorney's Office and the non-profit Justice Education Center. The program identifies at-risk youth in New Haven and other Connecticut cities who are offered the opportunity to earn vocational and technical certifications to foster career development. In 2018, the Department of Justice recognized Career Pathways as its most innovative crime prevention program.

Mr. Vatti has also served as an adjunct instructor at the University of Connecticut School of Law and coached travel soccer and basketball for many years.

The District Judges appointed the Magistrate Judge Selection Committee that screened applications for the vacancy created by Judge Garfinkel's retirement. Its Chair was Deirdre M.

Daly of Finn Dixon & Herling LLP in Stamford. Other members of the Selection Committee were: Angela Phillips-Arrington of the YMCA of Greater Hartford and the Connecticut Forum; Rabbi Herbert N. Brockman of Hamden; Moira L. Buckley of the Office of the Federal Public Defender in Hartford; Holly L. Cini of Jackson, Lewis, P.C. in Hartford; Stephen J. Fitzgerald of Garrison Levin-Epstein Fitzgerald & Pirrotti PC in New Haven; Thomas D. Goldberg of Day, Pitney, LLP in Stamford; Benjamin C. Jensen of Robinson & Cole, LLP in Hartford; Maximino Medina, Jr. of Zeldes, Needle & Cooper, P.C. in Bridgeport; Pamela J. Moore of McCarter & English LLP in Stamford; Edward Wilson, Jr. of the Office of the Attorney General for the State of Connecticut in Hartford; and Susan Wines of the Office of the United States Attorney in New Haven.

The Selection Committee received 48 applications for the judicial position following wide dissemination of the notice of vacancy. The Committee interviewed 12 applicants and identified a list of five exceptionally capable and distinguished lawyers to forward to the District Judges.

“Having worked very closely with Dave Vatti for over eight years, I am confident he will be an excellent Magistrate Judge” stated Deirdre Daly, who is also a former United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut. “As a prosecutor, he was widely respected throughout the legal community in Connecticut as a highly skilled attorney who did everything within his power to ensure that defendants were treated fairly and with dignity. All members of the Magistrate Judge Selection Committee believe he will bring that same deep commitment to justice to all his work as a judge.”

Stefan R. Underhill, Chief United States District Judge, said “Mr. Vatti has an excellent demeanor, is deeply committed to justice, and possesses a wealth of experience and knowledge. He has enjoyed a highly distinguished career as a federal prosecutor, and my colleagues and I are confident that he will continue to serve the people of Connecticut with fairness and compassion. We are delighted to welcome him to the ranks of judicial officers in our District.”

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, also called Article III 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 currently five active magistrate judges and four recalled magistrate judges on the Connecticut bench.

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