



PRESS RELEASE
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DISTRICT JUDGE TO RETIRE AFTER 16 YEARS OF SERVICE

Chief United States District Judge Michael P. Shea has announced that Senior United States District Judge Vanessa L. Bryant, who sits in Hartford, will assume inactive senior status on December 31, 2023.

Chief Judge Shea praised Judge Bryant's distinguished service to the Court. "For more than 16 years, Judge Bryant has served the people of Connecticut with tireless dedication, and throughout her influential career, she has paved the way for countless young legal professionals. Her colleagues, members of the bar, and court staff will miss her presence," he said.

Judge Bryant was nominated by President George W. Bush and sworn in as a United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut on April 2, 2007, as the first female African American federal judge in New England. Before that, from 1998 to 2007, she served on the Connecticut Superior Court as the administrative judge for the Litchfield Judicial District and the presiding judge of the Civil Division for the Hartford and New Britain Judicial Districts. Also legally blind, Judge Bryant has been an accomplished role model and inspiration for many, including the visually impaired.

Prior to her appointment to the state and federal judiciaries, Judge Bryant was a Partner at Hawkins, Delafield & Wood, LLP, a nationwide Wall Street public finance firm; a member of the Board of Pardons; Chapter 13 Trustee for the United States Bankruptcy Court of the District of Connecticut; Vice President and General Counsel of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority; in-house counsel at Aetna Life & Casualty Co. and Shawmut Bank; and, an Associate at the law firm of Day Pitney LLP, formerly Day, Berry & Howard LLP. She played a principal role in conceptualizing the transformative UConn 2000 infrastructure improvement program, drafting the University's master indenture and closing its first financings. Judge Bryant graduated *cum laude* from Howard University, and she received her juris doctor from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1978.

Throughout her trailblazing career on the bench, Judge Bryant issued many notable decisions, including her 2012 ruling that the Defense of Marriage Act violated the Constitution by denying same-sex couples the same rights and benefits as heterosexual couples. She is and has been involved with numerous professional, philanthropic, and community organizations. Of note, in her capacity as Chairwoman of the Hartford Human Relations Commission, she negotiated the establishment of the Hartford Police Department Civilian Review Board. She has received many awards, including the

NAACP Greater Hartford Branch Freedom Award and the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association Award.

Judge Bryant assumed senior status in 2021, following which United States District Judge Sarala V. Nagala filled her seat. The District of Connecticut has eight authorized judgeships, with one vacancy.

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