

The Institutional History of the U.S. District Courts

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This project essentially is an epiphenomenon of decades-long research on the backgrounds and career experiences of Article III judges on the U.S. district courts and courts of appeals. We learned that reliable information on the lower profile district judges—in particular those who served in the more distant past—often is difficult to come by.

As the district bench evolved since 1789, there have been numerous expansions and reorganizations, the latter necessitated largely by the former. For example, some positions moved from district to district within the same state, others crossed state lines, some moved only to return. Some positions were authorized by Congress as “temporary” lines, with some of those eventually converted to permanent and others terminated. Recess appointments would cloud the picture further, as some eventually were confirmed, others not, and still others simply would resign prior to definitive action by the Senate.

One of the innovations of our appeals court data set was a unique position numbering system.¹ Accordingly we wanted to devise an analogous system for the district judge data base.² We often found, however the seemingly simple task of “locating” a judge to be a rather daunting challenge indeed. Various government documents—our primary reference materials—often were incomplete, sketchy, and inconsistent with one another. We thus came to the rather disconcerting realization that there existed no reliable and definitive record of the institutional history of the district courts; ergo this volume.

There is a chapter for each state and for Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Each begins with a discussion of the statutory history that summarizes various court and position reorganizations, conversions, and terminations. The next section provides the statutory authority for each position. The final section enumerates the progression of occupants of each seat. The first column provides the position number, followed by the judge’s name, date of confirmation (and date of recess appointment, where relevant), date and reason for departure, and party affiliation. We also denote initial female and minority appointees from each state.

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Three of our many research assistants over the years deserve special

¹Gerard Gryski and Gary Zuk, *A Multi-User Data Base on the Attributes of U.S. Appeals Court Judges, 1801-2000*. Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, # . For example, 07.12.04 stands for the fourth occupant of the twelfth authorized position for the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

²Gerard Gryski, Gary Zuk, and Sheldon Goldman. *A Multi-User Data Base on the Attributes of U.S. District Court Judges, 1789-2000*. Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, # . For example, NY.SD.14.06 stands for the sixth occupant of the fourteenth seat authorized for the Southern District of New York.

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One final note: Gary Zuk passed away before this project could be completed. Gary was an extraordinary collaborator, colleague, and friend. This one's for him.

To Gary Zuk