

**Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law  
Judge's Panel – June 10, 2020**

**Hon. Rossana P. Fernandez**



Judge Fernandez is a Full Circuit Judge in the Domestic Relations Division at the Cook County Circuit Court. Judge Fernandez was appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court in February 2015 and elected to the bench in 2016. Her appointment is the first time a Hispanic has been appointed to a county-wide vacancy on the Circuit Court in Cook County, Illinois. Judge Fernandez was born in Chicago to parents from Guatemala and Uruguay and is a native Spanish speaker.

Prior to her appointment, Judge Fernandez was the owner of the law firm Fernandez and Associates, LLC, where she served as trial counsel for Fortune 500 companies. From 2000 to her appointment, Judge Fernandez was an arbitrator with the Cook County Mandatory Arbitration Program. She also previously practiced law with the firms of Sanchez, Daniels & Hoffmann, where she was the firm's first Latina partner, and Galvin, Lowery & Meade, as an associate concentrating in civil litigation.

Throughout legal career, Judge Fernandez has been a member of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois, the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois board of governors, the Chicago Bar Association, the Illinois State Bar Association, the National Association of Railroad Trial Counsel, and the Illinois Association of Defense Trial Counsel board of governors. Judge Fernandez also has a steadfast commitment to pro bono work, including previously assisting undocumented and indigent individuals and being an integral force to Chicago-Kent College of Law creating its first immigration law course.

Judge Fernandez earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois, with honors, and her law degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago-Kent College of Law.

**Hon. Sophia H. Hall**



Judge Hall is the administrative presiding judge of the Resource Section of the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Department of the Circuit Court of Cook County, charged with creating initiatives to facilitate collaboration between the court and the community to better serve children and families within the Juvenile Court's jurisdiction. Judge Hall is also assigned to the Chancery Division, where she hears cases seeking equitable relief, corporate and partnership cases, class actions, and declaratory judgment actions, among others.

Judge Hall was elected a judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County in 1980. She served in the Criminal Division for four years and thereafter in the Chancery Division for five years—the first woman in 20 years to serve in either division. When assigned as the presiding judge of the Juvenile Division in 1992, she was the first woman ever to serve as the presiding judge of any division or district of the Cook County Circuit Court.

After completing her law degree, Judge Hall joined the firm of McCoy, Ming & Black. During that time, she was also an administrative assistant to Stanley Kusper, Jr., former Clerk of Cook County, and was an adviser on election law. Subsequently, Hall joined Mitchell, Hall, Jones & Black and remained with them until her election to the bench in 1980.

Judge Hall is a past chair of the board of trustees of The National Judicial College. She is a past member of the board of the State Justice Institute, to which she was appointed by President William Clinton and confirmed by the U.S. Senate on April 3, 1998, concluding her service in 2010. She is also a past member of the board of directors of the National Center for State Courts. Judge Hall is a past chair of the National Conference of State Trial Judges of the Judicial Division of the American Bar Association and a past president of the National Association of Women Judges and of the Illinois Judges Association.

Judge Hall is a life member of the NAACP and has served in various capacities at both state and local level. She has been inducted into the *Today's Chicago Woman* Hall of Fame, received a Civil Rights Award from the Cook County Bar Association, and appeared in *Who's Who of America 46th Edition*. Hall has written numerous articles for various publications, speaks at a wide number of venues each year and has appeared on a number of television and radio broadcasts.

Among Judge Hall's publications are the following: "Combating Bias through Judicial Leadership," a chapter in the book *Enhancing Justice: Reducing Bias*, published in 2018, and "Examining New Paradigms to Address the Complexities of Family and Juvenile Cases," a chapter in the book *The Improvement of the Administration of Justice*, seventh edition, 2001, both published by the American Bar Association. She also authored articles on "Interlocutory Injunctions" and "Declaratory Judgments" published in the *Chicago Bar Association Record*.

Judge Hall earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin and her law degree from Northwestern Pritzker School of Law.

### Hon. Virginia M. Kendall



Judge Kendall was appointed a United States District Judge of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois in January 2006. Prior to her judicial appointment, she served over ten years as a federal prosecutor in Chicago in both the Public Corruption Unit and as the Child Exploitation Coordinator where she tried dozens of jury trials. While a federal prosecutor, she was appointed to the U.S. Attorney General's Advisory Panel that reviewed all multi-jurisdictional child exploitation and trafficking cases and served as Project Safe Neighborhoods Coordinator. She has received awards for her work with victims and honorary degrees for her human trafficking work and her pro bono work.

Judge Kendall is the co-author of *Child Exploitation and Trafficking: Examining Global Enforcement and Supply Chain Challenges and U.S. Responses* (Rowman & Littlefield 2016) and *Child Exploitation and Trafficking: Examining the Global Challenges and the U.S. Responses* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2012), with T. Markus Funk. She has authored numerous articles on a variety of topics including international human rights, human trafficking, public corruption, and transnational

investigations. Aside from her own writing, she also serves as an editor of *Litigation Magazine* and is a member of the American Law Institute where she works as an Advisor to the drafting of a model penal code for sexual offenses.

Active in the legal community, Judge Kendall teaches human trafficking and supply chain law at University of Chicago Law School, Northwestern University School of Law and Loyola University Chicago School of Law. She lectures extensively both domestically and internationally (more than 30 countries) in the areas of human trafficking, public corruption, ethics, and judicial training. Domestically, she created a human trafficking training module for task forces and judges that has been implemented throughout the United States.

Judge Kendall is a member of the UNODC's Judicial Integrity Network and served on an Expert Committee which drafted an international model social media ethics code for judges. She served six years on the Judicial Conference of the United States' Codes of Conduct Committee where she drafted the Advisory Opinion for the US judiciary on its use of social media. In 2019, she was appointed by Chief Justice Roberts to serve on the Judicial Conference of the United States Committee on International Judicial Relations.

She holds numerous positions in domestic and international bar associations and is currently chairing the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Section's rewriting of a model code for the treatment of victims and witnesses. Additionally, she was the *Peter and Patricia Gruber Fellow in Women's Rights* at Yale Law School in 2018.

Aside from her work in human trafficking and international human rights, Judge Kendall serves as a multi-district litigation judge and as a Patent Pilot Program judge in her district. She is also currently serving on the Administrative Office of the Court's COVID Task Force Committee for the reopening of jury trials.

Judge Kendall earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Northwestern University and her law degree from Loyola University School of Law.

### Nerissa Diaz Moisan – Moderator



Nerissa Diaz Moisan is an attorney at Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP, the first 50-state law firm. Born and raised in Chicago, Nerissa was educated at Northwestern University and DePaul University, two of the city's leading institutions. She is fluent in English and Spanish. Nerissa is passionate about being involved and creating community within the legal profession, thus highly valuing diversity and inclusion. She often defends corporations in various tort and contract matters. Nerissa has successfully represented clients in a broad range of practice areas, including toxic tort litigation, breach of contract claims, professional liability, construction defects, product liability, and defamation. She previously worked to exonerate the innocent at Northwestern University's Center on Wrongful Convictions, externed for the

Honorable Judge Raúl Vega, provided in-house legal advice for Levy Restaurants as well as worked at a plaintiff's subrogation firm and boutique insurance defense firm. When she isn't working, Nerissa enjoys international study and travel with her husband, reading, writing, dancing, and spending time with others.