

## NEWS FROM U.S. DISTRICT COURT

October 9, 2020

**New Full-Time Magistrate Judge Position:** The Judicial Conference of the United States has approved a third full-time United States Magistrate Judge for the District of South Dakota. The new position will be stationed in Pierre and will serve the Central and Northern Divisions. The successful candidate will serve for an eight-year term and may be appointed to successive terms. Applications will be accepted through Friday, November 6, 2020. For more information about the position and the selection process, see the [Vacancy Notice for U.S. Magistrate Judge](#) and [Application Form](#) posted on the district court's website.

**Virtual Naturalization Ceremonies:** The pandemic has caused some changes in how applicants complete their journey towards U.S. citizenship. The U.S. District Court for the District of South Dakota and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) had to get creative when two large naturalization ceremonies scheduled at the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls were canceled this spring due to COVID-19.

The Court granted administrative authority to USCIS to administer the following Oath of Allegiance:

*I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.*

USCIS was able to administer the oath to everyone who was approved for citizenship—except those who had also requested a name change. Only a federal judge has the authority to grant a name change. This led to virtual naturalization ceremonies presided over by U.S. Magistrate Judge Veronica L. Duffy. Since March 2020, Judge Duffy has administered the Oath of Allegiance and granted the name change requests of over 160 U.S. citizenship applicants during several small virtual ceremonies. The Court will continue holding these virtual naturalization ceremonies until it is once again safe to hold larger in-person ceremonies.

**PACER ACCOUNT REMINDER:** In the [January 2020 Attorney Newsletter](#) we discussed upgrading your legacy PACER account. If you still haven't upgraded your PACER account, now is the time to do so. We anticipate transitioning to NextGen CM/ECF in 2021. After the

transition, you will not be able to electronically file documents in CM/ECF without an upgraded PACER account. Click [here](#) for instructions on how to upgrade your PACER account.