



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

# Public Information Office

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Ninth Circuit Taps Los Angeles Judge to Serve on Bankruptcy Appellate Panel**

SAN FRANCISCO — Chief Judge Mary M. Schroeder of the United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit has announced the appointment of Bankruptcy Judge Erithe A. Smith of Los Angeles to the Ninth Circuit Bankruptcy Appellate Panel (BAP), which resolves appeals arising out of bankruptcy court decisions.

Judge Smith's appointment to the BAP was approved Nov. 20 by the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, governing body for the federal courts of the western United States. She will succeed Bankruptcy Judge John E. Ryan, her colleague on the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California. Judge Ryan is completing a seven-year term on BAP, the last two as chair.

Judge Smith was appointed to bankruptcy bench for the Central District of California in May 1994. Prior to that, she had been in private practice for nine years as a bankruptcy lawyer in Irvine and Newport Beach. She is the first African-American woman to serve as a bankruptcy judge in the Ninth Circuit.

"Judge Smith has earned a reputation among other bankruptcy judges as hard working, very collegial and very knowledgeable about bankruptcy law," Judge Schroeder observed.

A Los Angeles native, Judge Smith received her J.D. from the Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California at Berkeley in 1982, and a B.A. in political science from Loyola Marymount University in 1979. She had been a law clerk to Bankruptcy Judge

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Peter Elliott in Santa Ana for two years, 1983-85, and also clerked one year for the late Justice Marcus Kaufman of the California Court of Appeals after graduating from law school.

Judge Smith is currently an associate editor of the American Bankruptcy Institute (ABI) Law Journal and also serves as judicial chair of the ABI's Bankruptcy Battleground West, which presents an annual advanced educational program for bankruptcy practitioners in the Southern California area. She is a member and former director of the Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles and was recently appointed to the ABA Section of Business Law Ambassadors Program, which develops programs designed to enhance the relationship between the Business Law Section and minority bar organizations.

The BAP, which is based in the Richard H. Chambers United States Court of Appeals Building in Pasadena, hears some 600 cases each year, roughly 60 percent of the appeals originating out of bankruptcy courts throughout the Ninth Circuit (district courts hear the remainder of the appeals). BAP judges are appointed by the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit. Other bankruptcy judges from around the circuit also serve on appellate panels on a pro tem basis.

The U.S. Courts for the Ninth Circuit consists of the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the federal district and bankruptcy courts in 15 judicial districts serving nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions.

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