

Du, Trutanich Assume New Roles in District of Nevada

Miranda Du, chief judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada, began her new duties in September 2019, and **Nicholas Trutanich, U.S. Attorney for the District of Nevada,** took his oath of office in January 2019. *Nevada Lawyer* offers a look into the careers of these two federal leaders in Nevada's legal community.

MIRANDA M. DU: Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada

BY JENNIFER SMITH-PULSIPHER, NEVADA LAWYER STAFF



Although Chief Judge Miranda M. Du has lived in numerous cities throughout the world, home means Reno, Nevada, to her.

After her birth in Ca Mau, Vietnam, Du's family moved frequently. During her childhood, her family left by boat for Malaysia. After immigrating to the U.S., Du resided in Winfield and Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Seattle, Washington; and Oakland, California, attending a variety of schools throughout the country.

She attended the University of California, Davis, earning her undergraduate degree with honors in history and economics. She then attended the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, earning her J.D. in May 1994. That same year, she moved to Las Vegas to join the McDonald Carano Wilson (MCW) LLP law firm.

"I started [practicing law] in Reno to work with my assigned mentor at the time and to wait for the bar results," she

said. "I appreciated how much I enjoy the Reno community, so I transferred to work in the Reno office after about a year in Las Vegas."

Although she was hired to strengthen MCW's environmental law practice, she enjoyed learning litigation practice from MCW's senior attorneys, and went on to chair MCW's employment and labor law group. Du practiced law at MCW for nearly 20 years before U.S. Senator Harry Reid presented her with the opportunity to join the bench as a judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada, when Judge Roger L. Hunt took senior judge status.

"I did not seek the appointment, but I could not refuse the offer," Du said. "I was at a point in my career where I wanted to find a way to do more public interest work, and serendipity definitely played a role when I was asked to serve."

President Barack Obama nominated Du for the position; she took her oath of office in April 2012. She maintained chambers in Las Vegas for a year before transferring back to Reno in April 2013. She still maintains her chambers there, and she is an active member of the Reno community.

Du became chief judge of the U.S. District Court for Nevada in 2019, taking over in that role after Judge Gloria Navarro finished her term that year. In addition to serving as chief judge, she also serves as one of three judges

participating in the Patent Pilot Program, whereby patent cases are assigned to the judges if the presiding judge elects to reassign the case.

Du enjoys her work on patent cases; she said, "I get to be tutored on varied technical issues involved in patent cases, such as learning how tasers work or the benefits of fish oil." Civil cases also interest her, such as homeowners' association foreclosure sales, or prisoners' civil rights cases. "The latter category of cases ... presents interesting constitutional issues that require more careful scrutiny because they are filed by pro se litigants," she said.

She also enjoys watching experienced attorneys at work.

"I am most impressed when attorneys are thoroughly prepared, know the issues to highlight, know when to concede unavailing points while moving on to the next best arguments, and demonstrate professionalism and respect for opposing counsel," she said. "Periodically, I see a performance from experienced attorneys that combines all these qualities like a symphony, and I am reminded of how much I enjoy what I get to do."

Du has the following advice for attorneys – not just those appearing before her.

"Be diligent and always consider your audience. Maintain your integrity and guard your reputation," she said, following with "Embrace and enjoy your work; and if you don't find joy in your work, make positive change. Find a healthy way to manage your stress."



NICHOLAS TRUTANICH: U.S. Attorney for Nevada

BY ROBERT HORNE, NEVADA LAWYER STAFF



Nicholas Trutanich's favorite courses at Georgetown University Law Center involved criminal law and procedure, so it makes perfect sense that the Georgetown grad is now serving as the new U.S. Attorney for the District of Nevada.

Trutanich, who was born and raised in San Pedro, California, oversees the investigation and litigation of all criminal and civil cases brought on behalf of the U.S. in the District of Nevada. He supervises an office of more than 100 staff and assistant U.S. Attorneys, who handle cases involving violent and organized crime, cybercrime, domestic and international terrorism, narcotics trafficking, white collar crime, public corruption, civil rights violations, and a wide range of affirmative and defensive litigation, including asset forfeiture, financial litigation, environmental enforcement and programs fraud.

Trutanich completed his undergraduate degree in 2002 from the University of California, Davis with a bachelor of science degree in managerial economics. After graduating from law school in 2005, Trutanich started his career as a litigation associate at an international law firm. Two years later, he served as a law clerk for the U.S. District

Court for the Central District of California before joining the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles as a prosecutor.

As an assistant U.S. Attorney, Trutanich handled complex grand jury investigations and criminal prosecutions, including mortgage fraud, money laundering, identity theft, tax fraud, human trafficking, national security, illegal firearm and immigration offenses. Trutanich also volunteered to detail to Iraq as the deputy justice attaché, where he coordinated, counseled and supervised various law enforcement partners. He also advised on ongoing counterterrorism prosecutions and acted as the liaison to members of the Iraqi judiciary and law enforcement.

In fall 2014, he was the deputy chief of the Violent and Organized Crime Section when he left the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California to serve as the first assistant attorney general and chief of staff at the Office of Nevada's Attorney General.

Trutanich said his experience as a prosecutor and arguing cases in court are key factors that help him in his current role.

"It's important to obtain as much substantive experience as you can, particularly arguing motions, representing clients at trial and writing briefs," Trutanich said. "Many lawyers in our office gained that experience by serving as prosecutors in district attorney offices and/or working in private practice (law firms)."

Trutanich said the most important skill or quality that a U.S. Attorney must possess is integrity. And after going through the process, patience must also be an important quality. Trutanich was

nominated by President Trump in July 2018. He was unanimously confirmed by a U.S. Senate voice vote on Jan. 2, 2019, and sworn into office on Jan. 16, 2019.

"Over the course of about two years, I interviewed with Main Justice in Washington, D.C., and both U.S. senators from Nevada, and I was confirmed by the U.S. Senate with unanimous consent," he said. "I was honored and humbled to be considered for U.S. Attorney, as it would allow us to help prioritize public safety in our communities through targeted, impactful federal prosecutions and to promote ethics, diversity and crime prevention."

While federal cases tend to be larger in scope than cases tried in state court, interacting with the U.S. Attorney's Office is really no different than interacting with the local district attorney.

For lawyers representing defendants whom the U.S. Attorney's Office has charged with criminal cases, Trutanich said his office works daily with defense counsel to either resolve cases before trial or reach verdicts via jury and bench trials.

For lawyers representing law enforcement agencies, state and local governments, government agencies and components from Main Justice, Trutanich said its important that his office coordinates closely with those lawyers – especially those representing law enforcement partners – to make sure both are working toward the same goals.

Outside the office, Trutanich added that the prosecutors in his office are actively engaged in local professional associations, such as the Clark County Bar Association and the Inns of Court.

"Prosecutors in the District of Nevada are dedicated public servants who are committed to doing justice," Trutanich said. "Whether it's by working around the clock on righteous prosecutions or by engaging our communities to raise awareness and help prevent crime."