

Nevada's Newest Federal Bankruptcy Judge: The Hon. Natalie Cox

BY ROBERT HORNE, NEVADA LAWYER STAFF

On January 27, 2020, Judge Natalie M. Cox accepted her appointment to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Nevada. After an existence and career spanning from coast-to-coast, Judge Cox returned to the home of her alma mater to assume the role she prepared for through hard work, determination and skill. *Nevada Lawyer* offers an insight into the Bankruptcy Court's newest member, who took time to share her background and wisdom.

Cox knew little about bankruptcy law until she took Secured Transactions and Bankruptcy Law courses with Professor Bruce Markell at UNLV's William S. Boyd School of Law. Now, the 2001 graduate of the charter class at Boyd, is the newest appointee to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Nevada.

"Prior to taking those classes in law school, I had no understanding of bankruptcy law and never considered it as an area of law that I would pursue," Cox said. "After law school, with my newfound interests, I began practicing commercial litigation and bankruptcy law. So, while those classes alone certainly did not fully prepare for my current position as a Bankruptcy Court judge, they sparked my interest and started me along the path that led to this point."

Cox's path has taken her from Alaska to Michigan, to Tennessee, to Delaware and finally to Las Vegas – a return to Southern Nevada. She was born in Kodiak, Alaska, and attended elementary school there until she completed third grade. She spent the next three years of her life in Morrice, Michigan, before moving to Eagle River, Alaska, where she graduated from high school.

Cox attended college at Austin Peay State University on a full basketball scholarship – "Let's go Peay!" she said. She also played on the softball team for the Governors while earning her bachelor's degree in history in 1997.

After completing her undergraduate degree, Cox enrolled at the Boyd School of Law and graduated in 2001. "I'm a proud member of the charter class," she said.

During the summer between her second and third year in law school, Cox served as a law clerk for the Las Vegas firm Jolley, Urga, Wirth & Woodbury. After law school, she continued on at that firm as an associate for the next five years.

She left Jolley, Urga, Wirth & Woodbury and spent nine years as an associate, then as a partner, at the Las Vegas law firm of Kolesar & Leatham. In 2015, she left private practice and began working as a trial attorney for the Department of Justice, Office of the U.S. Trustee in Wilmington,



Delaware, where she oversaw and litigated Chapter 11 cases. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she was the assistant U.S. trustee in Nashville, where she oversaw Chapter 7 and Chapter 11 cases, and supervised Chapter 7 trustees.

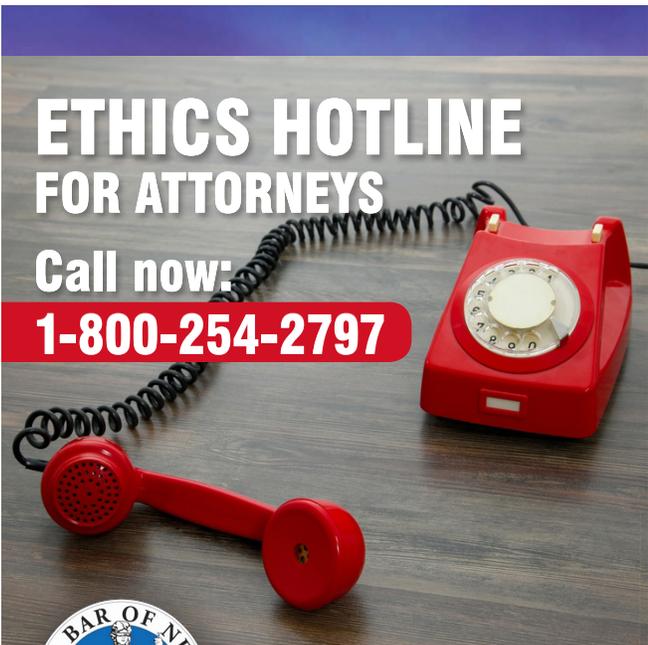
When the opportunity arose to serve as a U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge, Cox decided to put her years of bankruptcy experience to good use.

"I sought the appointment as a U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge because I was drawn to the challenge and great responsibility imparted by such an important and honorable position," she said.

After the application process, then came the hard work for an appointment to bench. She said the process is not for the faint of heart, as the background check is a very long and thorough process.

Judge Cox completed the lengthy appointment process and was sworn in on Jan. 27, 2020, by then-Chief Bankruptcy Judge Bruce T. Beesley. Her appointment was made by the judges of

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the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. She is assigned to Courtroom 3 at the Foley Federal Building in Las Vegas.

Cox said the most important skill for a bankruptcy judge to possess is impartiality. And what advice would she offer to other attorneys seeking a federal judgeship?

"Instead of focusing on becoming a judge, focus on developing those skills and traits that will make you a good judge when the opportunity arises," Cox said.

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Nevada received 9,962 bankruptcy filings in fiscal year 2019 ending September 30. The court is authorized three permanent and one temporary bankruptcy judgeships, according to a press release from the court.

Judge Cox will be posting her specific procedural and courtroom guidelines on the court's website – www.nvb.uscourts.gov.

While Cox is a recent appointment to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Nevada, her staff is experienced.

"Everyone who has worked with chambers staff for Courtroom 3 in the last several years will recognize the same familiar faces and for the most part similar processes for dealing with our office," Cox said. "Hopefully, this will make for a seamless transition."

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