

Second Judicial District Court Judicial Class of 2021

By now, it is well known that we welcomed seven new judges to the Second Judicial District this year. The final five took their oaths of office on Friday, February 5 and started presiding over cases this past Monday, February 8, 2021. Following are brief profiles of our seven new judges.



Judge Courtney Weaks

An Albuquerque native, Judge Courtney Weaks is SJDC's newest proud Jayhawk, having graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in English Literature in 2004. She returned to the beloved Land of Enchantment to attend UNM Law School, where she met her husband Jason, and graduated in 2007.

She began her career at the Second Judicial District Attorney's office, prosecuting criminal cases in Metropolitan Court, and went on to work in the Felony DWI Division, prosecuting subsequent DWI charges as well as vehicular homicide cases. Judge Weaks then entered private practice where she focused on criminal defense work, which included doing contract

work for the Law Officer of the Public Defender in addition to practicing family law.

Judge Weaks was elected to the Metropolitan Court Bench in 2014 where she served as the Presiding Judge of Metropolitan Court's Specialty Court Programs as well as the Presiding Judge of the Court's Behavioral Health Court Program and the Early Intervention Program.

Judge Weaks also serves as an executive of Bernalillo County's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's (BCCJCC) Subcommittee on Reintegration and Reentry.

Judge Weaks and her husband reside in Albuquerque's beautiful North Valley with their two-year-old daughter and their corgi Zeus.



Judge Catherine Begaye

Judge Catherine Begaye, a member of the Navajo Nation, is New Mexico's only Native American District Court Judge. She fondly recalls growing up "among the pines" in Flagstaff, Ariz., developing a love for the outdoors. This passion is reflected in the framed photos of National Parks and unique geological formations in her office.

Judge Begaye also is a graduate of UNM Law School, where she was the Editor in Chief of the New Mexico Law Review and a Dean's Award recipient for being a student who made outstanding contributions to the law school community.

She worked as a Public Defender representing juveniles and adults in District and Appellate courts. When she went into private practice in 2013, she found her calling in her work with Native families in the abuse and neglect arena.

As a result of her expertise, Judge Begaye has been invited to present to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), Judicial Conclave, the annual Corinne Wolfe Center for Child and Family Justice Core training for new judges and attorneys, and the JDAI Deep End Initiative. She is the Chair of the Children's Court Rules Committee, a member of the NM Partners, and a board member of Casa Q.

Judge Britt Baca-Miller

Judge Britt Baca-Miller was born and raised in Albuquerque. She holds a bachelor's degree from Eastern New Mexico University, a master's degree in public administration, and a juris doctor degree from the University Of New Mexico School Of Law.

She has worked as a public defender in Albuquerque since 2013, representing indigent individuals in cases ranging from DWI to first-degree murder. She represented clients in dozens of felony jury trials in this role.

She has served on the board of directors of the New Mexico Hispanic Bar Association, and is a member of the Hispanic National Bar Association and the New Mexico Women's Bar Association. She is honored to be appointed to the Second Judicial District Court criminal bench.



Judge Bruce Fox

Judge Bruce Fox received his B.A. from the University of Connecticut and his J.D. from Western New England University.

He has been licensed to practice law in New Mexico since 1993, and has spent his entire career working in the courts of New Mexico, the Navajo Nation, and the Pueblo of Laguna.

His most recent position was Chief Judge for the Pueblo of Laguna. He was also a New Mexico Public Defender for many years in the 2nd Judicial District, and spent the early part of his career as a legal aid attorney at DNA Legal Services on the Navajo Nation.

Throughout his career, Judge Fox has worked on developing a better understanding of addiction and behavioral health issues and their impact on the criminal justice system. He is a strong believer in drug courts and mental health courts.

He was thrilled to be able to return to the 2nd Judicial District Court as Judge, and is looking forward to the challenges and demands of working on the criminal docket.



Judge Joseph Montano

Judge Joseph Montano is an Albuquerque native, and a 2001 graduate of St. Pius X High School. He earned a political science degree from California Lutheran University in 2005, and a J.D. from UNM School of Law in 2008.

After law school, Judge Montano worked for the University of Michigan's Athletic Department as a Compliance Assistant. He also was the Director of Compliance for UNM's Athletic Department. He worked in the Second Judicial District Attorney's Office for the past 10 years, most recently serving as the Deputy District Attorney managing the General Crimes Felony Trial Division.

Upon being appointed to the Second Judicial District Court bench, Judge Montano said:

"I am grateful to have been appointed by Governor Lujan Grisham to serve as District Court Judge in Bernalillo County where I was born and raised. As a prosecutor I was compassionate when necessary, zealous when appropriate, but always fair and reasonable. As a judge I will balance the interest of the community with the rights of the criminally accused in an ethical, impartial, competent and collegial manner. I look forward to hitting the ground running!"



Judge Alma Roberson

Judge Alma Cristina Roberson was born in the border town of El Paso, Texas to immigrant parents from Mexico. Her father, a Vietnam Veteran, worked carpentry and factory jobs. Her mother was a homemaker.

Judge Roberson moved to Albuquerque in 2009 to attend the University of New Mexico School of Law. She graduated in 2012 and started soon after as an attorney in the Metro Division of the Law Offices of the Public Defender. In 2015, she moved to the Juvenile Division of LOPD where she found her true passion, working with children and their families.

As part of her advocacy, Judge Roberson served as a board member for Bernalillo County's Reducing Racism and Ethnic Disparities Committee for two years. In September of 2019, she was selected for NJDC's and Georgetown Law's Ambassadors for Racial Justice Program, a pilot project dedicated to fighting racial inequities in the juvenile justice system.

Currently, Judge Roberson serves on the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court National Project Advisory Board for the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The goal of this project is to create training opportunities on best practices for juvenile drug treatment courts across the country.

Judge Roberson is honored for the opportunity to serve children, families, and her community as a Children's Court Judge for the Second Judicial District.



Judge Jennifer J. Wernersbach graduated from the University Of New Mexico School Of Law in 2004 and practiced as a trial lawyer for sixteen years, primarily in the areas of criminal law and civil rights in both state and federal court.

About her appointment, Judge Wernersbach said:

"I feel honored and excited to have been appointed to the bench, and for the opportunity to serve the citizens of Bernalillo County in this new role. I'm looking forward to joining a strong team of judges and helping move the court through the COVID-19 crisis while continuing the tradition of judicial distinction in the Second Judicial District."
