



***United States Bankruptcy Court
Southern District of New York***

Hon. Martin Glenn
Chief Judge

Vito Genna
Clerk of Court

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 5, 2023

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DISTINGUISHED BANKRUPTCY JUDGE TO RETIRE FROM SOUTHERN DISTRICT BENCH

The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York announces that Judge Cecelia G. Morris, formally chief judge, has declared her intention to retire on January 31, 2024.

Born to North Central Texas cotton farmers and the youngest of seven children, Judge Morris achieved a significant milestone as the first in her family to graduate from college, earning her degree from West Texas State University in 1969, followed by her graduation from John Marshall Law School in 1977.

Throughout her distinguished career, Judge Morris's tenure has been marked by her unwavering empathy for unfortunate debtors, her commitment to fairness towards creditors, and her dedication to upholding stringent standards for all involved. In her courtroom, all individuals, especially those without legal representation, were afforded meaningful opportunities to be heard and received well-reasoned and prompt decisions.

Judge Morris embarked on her legal career in 1977 as an Assistant District Attorney in Griffin, Georgia, before transitioning to Clerk of Court in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Georgia. In 1988, she transferred to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York to serve as the Clerk of the Court. In this capacity, she expanded the role of the clerk of court to encompass bankruptcy jurisprudence, budget administration, staff management, human resource matters, and financial oversight.

Judge Morris's pioneering spirit revolutionized the federal court system when she introduced technology that enabled parties to file court documents over the internet electronically. She was pivotal in drafting, developing, and implementing a comprehensive electronic case management and filing system, including electronic notice provisions addressing service issues and ethical implications. Furthermore, Judge Morris instituted a court-governed mediation program in the Southern District and authored the "Guidelines for Prepackaged Chapter 11 Cases."

Upon her appointment as a bankruptcy judge in 2000, Judge Morris continued her innovative contributions, co-creating the first federal court-governed home loan modification program in the United States, known as the "Southern District of New York's Loss Mitigation Program." In 2022, she followed this by establishing the "Student Loan Mitigation Program."

Judge Morris also left an indelible mark by becoming the first judge in the nation to permit legally married same-sex couples to file a joint bankruptcy case. She curtailed the practice of filing documents under seal with her Anthracite decision, reinforcing the public's right to access court documents.



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Throughout her tenure, Judge Morris presided over numerous high-profile cases, including Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities, Fairfield Sentry, Johns Manville, Barneys, Desigual, Dynegy, FKF 3, Saint Vincent's Catholic Medical Centers, Saint Francis Health Care Foundation, New York Military Academy, Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, and Anthracite. She also mediated significant issues in Adelphia, Delphi, SunEdison, Lyondell, Avaya, and Lehr Construction.

Judge Morris contributed to the creation of a bankruptcy law treatise by Bloomberg Law (now BNA) and chaired its Innovation Board. She authored several articles on electronic filing, including a chapter on electronic case filing in *Collier on Bankruptcy*, as well as articles on loss mitigation, mediation, the consumer credit counseling requirement in bankruptcy, and cross-border insolvency cases under chapter 15 of the Bankruptcy Code. She testified before Congress and served on the Judicial Conference of the United States Committee on Information Technology, appointed by Chief Justice Roberts, for six years. Prior to this, she served on the Bankruptcy Judges Advisory Board to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. She also imparted her knowledge by teaching Bankruptcy Ethics at St. John's University's LL.M. Bankruptcy program.

In 2012, Judge Morris became Chief Judge for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, where she revitalized the Local Rules, established a free legal clinic for pro se litigants, and crafted a comprehensible form Chapter 13 plan. Under her leadership, the court seamlessly transitioned to remote services during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring the continuity of judicial hearings without interruption.

Beyond her professional achievements, Judge Morris dedicated a substantial portion of her time to community service and legal education. She was a frequent speaker at CLE events and played a pivotal role in creating the Hudson Valley Bankruptcy Bar Association's annual program, now in its twentieth year. She was instrumental in the formation of The Honorable Tina L. Brozman Foundation, a not-for-profit organization focused on finding an effective test for ovarian cancer. This foundation honors her friend and mentor, Tina Brozman, a former Chief Bankruptcy Judge, and Judge Morris continues to serve on its board.

Judge Morris's extensive affiliations include membership in the International Insolvency Institute, American College of Bankruptcy, and the Global Restructuring Organization's Scientific Committee based in Modena, Italy. She also serves on the Board of Tina's Wish, an organization dedicated to funding groundbreaking research for the early detection and prevention of ovarian cancer. She is a Board Member on the Board of Visitors for Mid-Hudson Regional Hospital of Westchester Medical Center. Judge Morris's public service also extends to her work as a Journeyman Missionary in Danang, Viet Nam. Her numerous accolades include the Annual Conrad B. Duberstein Memorial Award for Excellence and Compassion in the Bankruptcy Judiciary and the New York Law Journal Impact Award for pioneering e-filing in federal court.



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In addition to her professional accomplishments, Judge Morris takes immense pride in her role as a mother to two daughters, Carmen and Marcia, and as a grandmother to Carmen and husband Matt's two children, Isabel and Gabriel.

Judge Morris will conclude her career on the bench on January 31, 2024.