

Judge Barbara Lynn to be Northern District's Next Chief Judge

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By *Mark Curriden*

(April 19) – U.S. Chief Judge Jorge Solis announced Tuesday that U.S. District Judge Barbara Lynn will succeed him as the next chief judge of the Northern District on May 1.



U.S. District Judge Barbara Lynn

Judge Lynn will be the first woman to be chief judge in the Northern District, which includes Dallas.

Judge Solis, who became the first Hispanic chief judge when he took the position in 2014, handled several high-profile cases during his 25 years on the federal bench, including striking down the City of Irving's method of electing city council members because it diluted the voting power of Hispanic residents.

"Solis and Lynn are two of our finest judges on the bench," Judge Patrick Higginbotham, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, said in an interview with *The Texas Lawbook*. "Solis has demonstrated sound and solid judgment. He's always thoughtful. No one ever says a critical word about him.

"And Barbara has always been a star, even when she was in law school and later as a trial lawyer and judge," Higginbotham said. "Barbara is an inspiration to all of us, but especially young women lawyers."

The chief judge of a federal district is primarily an administrative role. The position pays no additional money and judges may serve as chief up to seven years.

In a letter dated April 18, Judge Solis told U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts of his retirement and that Judge Lynn had the next most seniority and would be the district's next chief judge.

“Judge Solis has been a vital part of the federal court here in Dallas for 25 years,” Judge Lynn said in an interview Tuesday. “He is even-keeled and not one to shout or pound the table. He is very measured.”

A 1976 graduate of the University of Texas School of Law, Judge Solis was born in San Ygnacio, Texas, a city along the border between Texas and Mexico. He worked as a state and federal prosecutor in West Texas for many years. He served as a state court judge from 1989 to 1991.

President George H.W. Bush appointed Judge Solis to the federal bench in 1991. During his time as a judge, he handled several high-profile matters.

In 2010, Secret Service agents confiscated religious tracts because it was the size of U.S. currency. The tracts appear to be \$1 million bills on one side and “The million-dollar question: Will you go to heaven” on the reverse side.

Judge Solis ruled that the Secret Service violated the federal constitutional rights of a Texas evangelical group that printed the tracts.

“The Million Dollar Bill, taken as a whole, poses no reasonable risk of deceiving an honest, sensible and unsuspecting person,” Judge Solis wrote.

[Jason Bloom](#), a partner at Haynes and Boone and president of the Federal Bar Association in Dallas, said Judge Solis’ rulings “are very direct and to the point. He gets right to the issue in his opinions.”

President Bill Clinton nominated Judge Lynn to the federal bench in 1999.

A 1976 graduate of the SMU Dedman School of Law, Judge Lynn was a civil trial lawyer at Carrington Coleman in Dallas where she represented businesses and individuals in large and complex civil litigation.

“Judge Lynn is highly regarded as a federal judge in Texas and across the entire federal bench,” Bloom said. “She always allows time for young lawyers and is a great mentor and role model.”

Judge Lynn has handled many high-profile cases, too. She presided over the public corruption trial of former Dallas Mayor Pro Tempore Don Hill in 2010. She is currently presiding over the criminal prosecution of Dallas County Commissioner John Wiley Price.

“I’m proud of all the strides women have made in the legal profession and I hope that I am a role model for younger lawyers,” Judge Lynn said.