

United States Bankruptcy Court  
Central District of California

Julia W. Brand, Chief Judge  
Kathleen J. Campbell, Executive Officer / Clerk of Court



## PASSING OF THE GAVEL CEREMONY HELD AT COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT IN PASADENA

By Sofía Nagy, Model Intern Program Student Intern

On January 29, the change of Bankruptcy Court Chief Judge from late Judge Theodor C. Albert to Judge Julia W. Brand was commemorated at the Passing of the Gavel ceremony in Pasadena. The ceremony, held at the Richard H. Chambers United States Court of Appeals, welcomed approximately 200 attendees, and a livestream was made available. After the deeply felt passing of Judge Albert on May 5, 2025, Chief Judge Brand stepped into the role to guide the Court through the remainder of 2025 and was designated to serve a four-year term commencing on January 1, 2026.

U.S. Assistant Chief Deputy Marshal Kevin Williams opened court and introduced Scouts BSA Troop 55, who led the color guard and the pledge of allegiance. After Clerk of Court Kathleen J. Campbell's Call of the Calendar, Chief Judge Brand welcomed the guests, thanking them for their presence and reflected on the significance of Passing of the Gavel ceremonies. Chief Judge Brand began the program by introducing distinguished guests in attendance, including district court judges, magistrate judges, bankruptcy judges, recalled bankruptcy judges, and agency heads. She also acknowledged the recent loss of Judge Robin L. Riblet, a retired United States Bankruptcy judge and cherished member of the Santa Barbara community.



Left to right: Chief Judge Julia W. Brand and Bankruptcy Judge Maureen A. Tighe

Senior Circuit Judge Richard A. Paez conveyed Chief Circuit Judge Mary H. Murguia's best regards, noted "the untimely passing of Judge Albert as a tremendous loss for the Bankruptcy Court family and the Circuit," and extended congratulations to Chief Judge Brand in her new role. John-Patrick M. Fritz, Esq., partner at Levene, Neale, Bender, Yoo & Golubchik LLP and president of the Los Angeles Bankruptcy Forum, offered words of remembrance for Judge Albert. Mr. Fritz reflected on defining moments in Judge Albert's distinguished career, tracing his path from Stanford University and UCLA School of Law through his assumption of the role of Chief Bankruptcy Judge in 2022. Yet, as Mr. Fritz emphasized, "Judge Albert was more than a collection of these statistics. He was a human being, a man—heart, mind, and soul," and, in the words of a member of the Bar quoted in an interview, he "brought regality and humanity to the bench."

J. Scott Bovitz, Esq., partner at Bovitz & Spitzer, also offered thoughtful reflections on Judge Albert, sharing personal stories that illuminated the judge's character and intellectual passions—studying history and his fourteen years as an adjunct professor at Chapman University Fowler School of Law. Mr. Bovitz also recalled a 2024 trial in which, despite his battle with cancer, Judge Albert's command of the courtroom and the precision of his judicial craft remained unwavering, which elicited further admiration of his dedication to the bench.

Ms. Campbell's remarks addressed Chief Judge Albert's commitment to public service and offered words of welcome to Chief Judge Brand on behalf of the Clerk's Office. She reflected on the privilege of getting to know Judge Albert during the extraordinary challenges Judge Albert faced as chief judge—including the COVID-19 pandemic, repeated budget shortfalls, staff layoffs, and the constant threat of government shutdowns—yet he remained "the same calm, balanced person no matter what we faced." Ms. Campbell emphasized that Judge Albert was proud to serve the federal judiciary, and that the Court was equally proud to serve alongside him.

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It is a longstanding tradition for the Clerk's Office to present a gift to the outgoing Chief Judge; in this instance, the presentation was made to his wife, Deborah Gaskell Albert. Ms. Campbell presented Mrs. Albert with a memory book filled with contributions from judges and court employees across all court divisions to convey the profound impact Judge Albert had on the judiciary and on the lives of those who served with him. Ms. Campbell concluded by presenting Judge Albert's plaque, which will be displayed in the Board of Judges' Conference Room alongside the names and terms of all past chief judges. The plaque reads: "In Recognition of Your Dedication, Support, and Service."

Ms. Campbell praised Judge Brand for navigating the transition to Chief Judge "with courage, grace, and boundless energy." Ms. Campbell noted that Chief Judge Brand has already guided the Court through significant challenges, including budget shortfalls, periods of civil unrest, complex building and lease issues, and the longest government shutdown in history. Ms. Campbell closed by expressing her admiration and gratitude, telling Judge Brand that she looks forward to meeting the challenges of the future together.

Judge Martin R. Barash recognized Scouts BSA Troop 55 for presenting the colors and extended thanks to the organizations that generously supported the evening's reception: the Beverly Hills Bar Association, the Central District Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys Association (*cdcbaa*), the Financial Lawyers Conference, the Inland Empire Bankruptcy Forum, the Insolvency Law Commission, the International Women's Insolvency and Restructuring Confederation, the Los Angeles Bankruptcy Forum, the Orange County Bankruptcy Forum, the Orange County Bar Association, and the Turnaround Management Association Southern California Chapter. Judge Barash expressed appreciation to LA Bankruptcy Forum President Mr. Fritz for leading the fundraising efforts that made these contributions possible. Judge Barash further thanked all those who helped bring the event together, including judiciary and agency staff. He also reported that the Court made charitable contributions in memory of Judge Albert to causes near to his heart: City of Hope and the Cancer Discovery Fund of the Stanford Cancer Institute.

Mrs. Albert and Brendan Albert, Judge Albert's son, took part in the presentation honoring his legacy. Mrs. Albert expressed gratitude to all who supported Judge Albert throughout his career. She shared that Judge Albert cherished his service as a federal judge and as Chief, often telling her he was made for the job and could not have done it without Ms. Campbell and the dedicated members of his chambers. Together, Judge Albert's family members unveiled his portrait, which will be hung in the Board of Judges' Conference Room.

In her remarks, Judge Maureen A. Tighe expressed gratitude for Judge Albert's service and noted that he would have been "tremendously happy" to see Chief Judge Brand succeed him and present the gavel himself. Judge Tighe passed the gavel to Chief Judge Brand on Judge Albert's behalf, sharing an Irish blessing for a new position by John O'Donohue in Judge Albert's honor. A notoriously oversized gavel was presented as Judge Tighe mentioned Judge Albert's appreciation for a well-timed laugh.

Judge Mark D. Houle reflected on Chief Judge Brand's accomplished path to the bench, recalling her years in insolvency practice and the unique blend of intelligence, clarity, kindness, and steadiness she displayed even in their days as opposing counsel. He highlighted her fourteen years on the bench, her service on the Bankruptcy Appellate Panel, her receipt of the *cdcbaa* Calvin Ashlin Award in 2024 as Judge of the Year, and her leadership as Chief Judge of the Bankruptcy Appellate Panel before assuming the role of Chief Bankruptcy Judge. Judge Houle also shared warm observations from Chief Judge Brand's family, including descriptions of her inquisitiveness, empathy, and gift for bringing people together. Judge Houle described the high esteem expressed by various bankruptcy judges for Judge Brand's commitment to the rule of law, her ability to listen carefully and act decisively, and her consistent leadership and inspiration.



Left to right: Deborah Gaskell Albert and Kathleen J. Campbell, Clerk of Court



J. Scott Bovitz, Esq.



John-Patrick M. Fritz, Esq.

Chief Judge Dolly M. Gee, speaking on behalf of all the judges of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, appointed Judge Brand as Chief Bankruptcy Judge. Chief Judge Gee described Judge Brand as an outstanding jurist, a respected colleague, and a long-time friend whose connection dates to their undergraduate years and later resumed when they encountered each other again as judges. Chief Judge Gee expressed confidence that Judge Brand will lead with a steady hand, great wisdom, and a deep understanding of the needs of her court, coupled with a heartfelt appreciation for her colleagues.

Chief Judge Brand concluded the ceremony with sincere gratitude for the confidence placed in her, recalling Judge Albert's belief that serving on the bankruptcy bench is "the best job in the world." She acknowledged the family, friends, and colleagues whose support has shaped her path, recognizing her husband, her two sons, her sister, her aunt, and the law clerks who have served in her chambers. Reflecting on the difficult transition following Judge Albert's passing, she expressed appreciation for his steady guidance, for Ms. Campbell's leadership, and for the dedication of the Court's staff. She thanked her fellow judges for their counsel and the Bar for its partnership, reaffirming her commitment to collaboration and to the Court's mission.

Following the conclusion of the Passing of the Gavel ceremony, a reception was held on the first floor of the Richard H. Chambers Courthouse.

## JUDGE MARK D. HOULE REAPPOINTED

On February 10, 2026, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit announced that Judge Mark D. Houle would be appointed to a second 14-year term on the bench. Judge Houle's reappointment was effective February 17, 2026. Judge Houle has served the Court since 2012 and recently relocated from the Central District's Riverside Division to the Santa Ana Division effective October 1, 2025. Judge Houle will soon begin serving his second term on the Ninth Circuit Wellness Committee. He currently serves on the Bankruptcy Court Executive Committee, Space & Security Committee (chair), and IT Committee.



## HOLIDAY SCHEDULE AND COURT CLOSURES

Monday, May 25 - Memorial Day

Monday, June 19 - Juneteenth National Independence Day

To view the 2026 Federal Holiday Public Notice on the Court's website click [here](#).

## BANKRUPTCY FRAUD; FALSE CREDIT COUNSELING CERTIFICATES

The following information has been provided by the Office of the United States Trustee:

*In re Sylvester Donald Robinson*, Case No. 6:25-bk-18685-RB

On January 23, 2026, the Court dismissed the Chapter 13 case filed by Sylvester Donald Robinson and imposed a two-year bar against the debtor filing another case under any bankruptcy chapter. The case was the third one filed by the debtor within a four-month period. Two prior cases filed in the Eastern District of California previously had been dismissed based on the failure to file required information. In filing the current case, the debtor fabricated a credit counseling certificate, altering the date and name of a certificate that had been issued six months earlier to a different individual. The subject credit counseling agency had no record of a client with the debtor's name. The debtor did not oppose the U.S. Trustee's dismissal motion.

*In re Daniel Jesus Spear Tudares*, Case. No. 6:26-bk-10551-SY

Daniel Jesus Spear Tudares had filed thirteen prior bankruptcy cases since 2002, including seven Chapter 7 cases in the Riverside Division since December 2017. In filing a fourteenth bankruptcy case on January 27, 2026, the debtor submitted a fake credit counseling certificate and certified falsely that he received credit counseling within 180 days of the bankruptcy filing. However, the Chief Executive Officer of the credit counseling agency verified that the certificate evidencing the debtor's completion of the credit counseling course had a fabricated certificate number. The U.S. Trustee filed a motion to dismiss the bankruptcy case and requested a two-year re-filing bar. The debtor did not oppose the motion, which the Court granted at a hearing on March 12, 2026.

## TOP 10 CASES OF INTEREST\*

Debtor	Case Number	Chapter	Filed	Assets	Liabilities
2275 Sunset Plaza LLC	LA-26-11242-WB	11	02/11/26	\$50 - \$100 million	\$10 - \$50 million
Electric Bike Company LLC	SA-25-12810-SC	7	10/03/25	\$1 - \$10 million	\$1 - \$10 million
Frisco Baking Company, Inc.	LA-25-11395-NB	11	02/24/25	\$1 - \$10 million	\$10 - \$50 million
GRDN Hospitality	LA-25-16321-DS	11	07/24/25	\$1 - \$10 million	\$1 - \$10 million
Howard's Appliance, Inc	LA-25-21116-BB	11	12/10/25	\$1 - \$10 million	\$1 - \$10 million
The Litigation Practice Group P.C.	SA-23-10571-SC	11	03/20/23	\$1 - \$10 million	\$10 - \$50 million
Palo Verde Healthcare District	RS-25-17084-SY	9	09/30/25	\$10 - \$50 million	\$10 - \$50 million
Ronald Stephen Welty	SA-25-11408-MH	11	05/25/25	\$1 - \$10 million	\$1 - \$10 million
Pico-Union Housing Corporation	LA-26-12372-VZ	11	03/12/26	\$10 - \$50 million	\$10 - \$50 million
Windsor Terrace Healthcare, LLC	SV-23-11200-VK	11	08/23/23	\$1 - \$10 million	\$1 - \$10 million

\*Based on a combination of asset and liability levels, and/or name recognition.

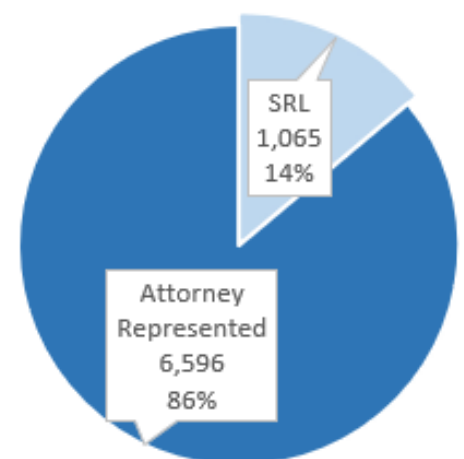
## BANKRUPTCY STATISTICS

The data below represents filings year to date thru March 31, 2026. Statistics based on internal filings data.

Divisional Filings YTD	Ch 7	Ch 11	Ch 13	Total	% change from previous YTD
Los Angeles	2,550	48	484	3,081	12.69%
Northern	375	5	54	454	0.67%
Riverside	2,055	14	366	2,435	17.01%
San Fernando Valley	526	24	133	683	30.34%
Santa Ana	855	27	125	1,007	18.05%
Total	6,381	118	1,162	7,661	15.31%

Business Filings	Ch 7	Ch 11	Ch 13	Total
<b>2026 YTD</b>	366	94	16	476
<b>2025 YTD</b>	276	90	13	379

Central District of CA - Filings YTD



The interactive Statistics Dashboard is a feature on the Court's website that provides up-to-date filing and closing data for chapter 7, 11, and 13 cases, as well as adversary proceedings. Users can view data sorted by division or from the entire Central District, or they can choose to view only pro se (SRL) or business cases. The Statistics Dashboard also displays year-by-year and month-by-month comparisons; another option compares each month of the current year to the corresponding month of the prior year. Access the "Interactive Statistics" through the link: <https://ecf.cacb.uscourts.gov/ecfstatsdash/ecfstatsdash-new.html>