

Third Circuit Appeals Court Confirms First Asian American Judge



On Monday, the U.S. Senate confirmed Cindy Chung as the first Asian American judge to serve on the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Chung, who has been the top federal prosecutor in Pittsburgh, won approval with a 50-44 vote, marking the second confirmation of a federal appeals court judge in the new year and the Biden administration's 99th overall judicial appointment.

The Biden administration has prioritized diversifying the federal judiciary, nominating women, people of color, and lawyers with broad professional experience, including public defenders, to U.S. district and appellate court seats. Of Biden's 30 circuit court appointments so far, 23 are women.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York praised Chung's long public service as a prosecutor fighting hate crimes, calling her "precisely the kind of person we want on the federal bench."

Chung's confirmation creates a 7-7 split on the court between Republican-appointed judges and those appointed by a Democrat. The 3rd Circuit hears appeals from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the Virgin Islands. Chung will join two other Biden appointees, Arianna Freeman, a former federal defender, and Tamika Montgomery-Reeves, the first Black woman to serve on Delaware's highest state court before her appointment to the federal bench.

Since November 2021, Chung has served as the U.S. attorney leading a nearly 60-lawyer team in the Western District of Pennsylvania. She has been a local or federal prosecutor since 2003. On a U.S. Senate form, she identified several hate crime prosecutions as among the most significant cases she handled over her career. Chung was on the prosecution team in 2012 that brought the first case under the Shepard-Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which resulted in the conviction and imprisonment of two defendants for forcing a vehicle carrying Hispanic men off the road.

As a Columbia Law School student, Chung interned in the office of then-circuit judge and now U.S. Supreme Justice Sonia Sotomayor on the New York-based 2nd Circuit.

Overall, Chung's appointment is a significant milestone in the ongoing effort to create a judiciary that reflects the diversity of the United States and ensures that all Americans have access to justice.

REFERENCES:

First Asian American Confirmed to Third Circuit Appeals Court