



U.S. Department of Justice
Executive Office for Immigration Review
Office of Policy
5107 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

NOTICE

Contact: Communications and Legislative Affairs Division
Phone: 703-305-0289 PAO.EOIR@usdoj.gov
www.justice.gov/eoir @DOJ_EOIR

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EOIR Announces 23 New Immigration Judges

FALLS CHURCH, VA – The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) today announced the appointment of 23 immigration judges to immigration courts in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Texas, and Virginia.

These immigration judges are career employees, and EOIR selected them after a thorough competitive application process. Attorney General Merrick B. Garland officially appointed Themistoklis E. Aliferis, Judy Lynn Archuleta, Abby Anna Batko-Taylor, Jennifer R. Bell, Jason E. Braun, Andrea Cole, Brian J. Counihan, Jonathan Goulding, Meghan E. Heesch, Andrew J. Hewitt, Jason L. Jones, Peter A. Kim, Jennie L. Kneedler, Vimala S. Mangoli, Jessica K. Miles, James F. Polivka, Sherease R. Pratt, Charles N. Purnell, Taiyyeba S. Skomra, Michelle A. Slayton, Richard W. VanVeldhuisen, Alysha M. Welsh, and Sarah B. Yeomans to their new positions.

EOIR continues to work to expand its immigration judge corps and welcomes qualified candidates from all backgrounds to join the agency. In addition to making a difference through service to our Nation, immigration judges join a diverse and inclusive workforce. Individuals interested in these critical positions are invited to [sign up for job alerts](#) that are sent when new opportunities become available.

Biographical information for the newly-appointed immigration judges follows:

Themistoklis E. Aliferis, Immigration Judge, New York – Varick Immigration Court

Themistoklis E. Aliferis was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Aliferis earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1996 from Louisiana Tech University and a Juris Doctor in 2000 from Louisiana State University – Paul M. Hebert Law Center. From 2018 to 2022, he served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in Miami. From 2007 to 2018, he was a solo practitioner representing noncitizens in Miami before the immigration court and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, DHS. From 2005 to 2006, he was an associate attorney at Alipaz Abogados and later at Bolet & Terrero in La Paz, Bolivia, handling international trade transactions. From 2002 to 2005, he counseled commercial clients in Montreal, Canada. From 2001 to 2002, he practiced civil litigation at the law firm of Chopin, Wager, Cole, Richard, Reboul and Kutcher LLP in New Orleans. In 2000,

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he served as a judicial law clerk in the 15th Judicial District Court of Louisiana. Judge Aliferis is a member of the Florida Bar and the Louisiana State Bar.

Judy Lynn Archuleta, Immigration Judge, Fort Worth Immigration Adjudication Center

Judy Lynn Archuleta was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Archuleta earned a Bachelor of Science in 1982 and a Juris Doctor in 1985, both from the University of Colorado. From 2019 to 2022, she served as a mediator for the Colorado Civil Rights Division in Denver. From 2010 to 2019, she served as an administrative law hearings officer for the city of Denver. Following appointment by the Governor of Colorado in 2000, she served as a county court judge and presiding judge for the 1st Judicial District in Golden, Colorado, through 2009. From 1985 to 2000, she served as a deputy district attorney for the 1st Judicial District in Golden. Judge Archuleta is a member of the Colorado Bar.

Abby Anna Batko-Taylor, Immigration Judge, Falls Church Immigration Adjudication Center

Abby Anna Batko-Taylor was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Batko-Taylor earned a Bachelor of Science in 2002 from Columbia University, Barnard College, a Juris Doctor in 2013 from the University of Texas School of Law, and a Master of Science in Social Work in 2013 from the University of Texas School of Social Work. From 2017 to 2022, she was a staff attorney on the Immigration Team at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) in Austin, Texas, representing survivors of violence before the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security; the immigration courts; the Board of Immigration Appeals; and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. From 2016 to 2017, she managed a Medical-Legal Partnership at TRLA in Austin. From 2013 to 2015, she was awarded a Julius Glickman Fellowship in Public Interest Law to manage a legal project at Volunteer Legal Services of Central Texas in Austin. Judge Batko-Taylor is a member of the State Bar of Texas.

Jennifer R. Bell, Immigration Judge, Atlanta – Peachtree Street Immigration Court

Jennifer R. Bell was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Bell earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2005 from Auburn University and a Juris Doctor in 2009 from Samford University, Cumberland School of Law. From 2019 to 2022, she served as an attorney advisor for the Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals, Department of Health and Human Services, in Atlanta. From 2018 to 2019, she served as an assistant commonwealth's attorney at the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney in Louisville, Kentucky. From 2010 to 2017, she served as a deputy district attorney for the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office in Montgomery, Alabama. From 2009 to 2010, she served as a judicial clerk in Auburn, Alabama. Judge Bell is a member of the Alabama State Bar and the Kentucky Bar.

Jason E. Braun, Immigration Judge, Annandale Immigration Court

Jason E. Braun was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Braun earned a Bachelor of Science in 2005 from Georgia State University and a Juris Doctor in 2008 from Antonin Scalia Law School. From 2015 to 2022, he was the director of legal services for Restoration Immigration Legal Aid in Arlington, Virginia. From 2014 to 2015, he was an associate attorney at Kelly & Crandall PLC, where his practice included representing juvenile noncitizens in Special Immigrant Juvenile cases. From 2005 to 2013, he was an

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associate attorney at Surovell Isaacs Petersen & Levy PLC in Fairfax. Judge Braun is a member of the Virginia State Bar.

Andrea Cole, Immigration Judge, Conroe Immigration Court

Andrea Cole was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Cole earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2004 from the University of Florida and a Juris Doctor in 2006 from Stetson University College of Law. From 2016 to 2022, she served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in Miami. From 2015 to 2016, she served as an asylum officer with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), DHS, in Miami. From 2007 to 2015, she was an associate in Miami handling immigration cases before EOIR and USCIS at the following firms: The Law Offices of Carlos M. Duque, PA (2014-2015); Cordero & Associates, PA (2009-2014); Bernstein, Osberg-Braun & De Moraes, PA (2009); The Law Offices of Mario M. Lovo PA (2008-2009); The Law Offices of Lourdes Martinez-Esquivel, PA (2008); and The Law Offices of Eduardo Soto, PA (2007-2008). Judge Cole is a member of the Florida Bar.

Brian J. Counihan, Immigration Judge, Batavia Immigration Court

Brian J. Counihan was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Counihan earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1997 from Niagara University and a Juris Doctor in 2000 from New York Law School. From 2010 to 2022, he served as an assistant chief counsel and deputy chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in Batavia and Buffalo, New York. From 2015 to 2017, he served a detail as a special assistant U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York. From 2005 to 2010, he served as an assistant district attorney with the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office in Syracuse, New York. From 2003 to 2005, he was a solo practitioner handling medical malpractice, criminal, and immigration cases in New York, New York. From 2000 to 2003, he served as an assistant district attorney with the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office in Central Islip and Riverhead, New York. Judge Counihan is a member of the New York State Bar.

Jonathan Goulding, Immigration Judge, Hartford Immigration Court

Jonathan Goulding was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Goulding earned a Bachelor of Science in 2002 from Northeastern University and a Juris Doctor in 2005 from Ave Maria School of Law. From 2018 to 2022, he served as an assistant U.S. attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan. From 2016 to 2018, he served as a senior attorney, and from 2007 to 2015, as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Department of Homeland Security, in Detroit. From 2008 to 2018, while at ICE, he served as a special assistant U.S. attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan. Judge Goulding is a member of the Massachusetts Bar.

Meghan E. Heesch, Immigration Judge, Otay Mesa Immigration Court

Meghan E. Heesch was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Heesch earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2007 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Juris Doctor in 2012 from Harvard Law School. From 2015 to 2022, she served

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as an assistant U.S. attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of California in San Diego, entering on duty through the Attorney General's Honors Program. From 2013 to 2015, she served as a clinical teaching fellow and supervising attorney in the Detainee Rights Clinic at the University of Minnesota Law School, James H. Binger Center for New Americans. From 2012 to 2013, she served as an attorney advisor at the Orlando Immigration Court, entering on duty through the Attorney General's Honors Program. Judge Heesch is a member of the Maryland State Bar and the Minnesota State Bar.

Andrew J. Hewitt, Immigration Judge, Atlanta – Ted Turner Drive Immigration Court

Andrew J. Hewitt was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Hewitt earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2006 from Michigan State University and a Juris Doctor in 2012 from the Georgia State University College of Law. From 2016 to 2022, he served as an assistant chief counsel and deputy chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in Atlanta. From 2012 to 2016, he was an immigration attorney in private practice with the law firm Socheat Chea PC in Duluth, Georgia, where he also handled cases on a pro bono basis. Judge Hewitt is a member of the State Bar of Georgia.

Jason L. Jones, Immigration Judge, New Orleans Immigration Court

Jason L. Jones was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Jones earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1995 and a Master of Arts in 1996, both from Old Dominion University, a Juris Doctor in 2001 from Oklahoma City University School of Law, and Master of Laws in Trial Advocacy in 2013 from Temple University School of Law. From 2021 to 2022, he served at the Department of the Navy as complex case counsel-prosecution, and from 2018 to 2021, he served as the Navy's director, Trial Counsel Assistance Program. From 2016 to 2018, he served as a military judge in the Southeast Judicial Circuit, Mayport, Florida. From 2002 to 2004, 2008 to 2010, and 2013 to 2016, he served as a military defense counsel at Naval Station San Diego, California; Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida; and Naval Station Bremerton, Washington. From 2004 to 2006, he served as assistant staff judge advocate at Naval Criminal Investigative Service Headquarters in Washington, D.C. From 2006 to 2007, and from 2010 to 2012, he served as the senior trial counsel at Legal Services Support Team Iraq, 1st Marine Logistics Group, Al-Anbar Province, Iraq, and at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida. From 2007 to 2008, he served as an appellate law clerk at the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals. From 2012 to 2013, while in the Navy, he served as a special assistant U.S. attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Judge Jones is a member of the State Bar of California and the District of Columbia Bar.

Peter A. Kim, Immigration Judge, Los Angeles – N. Los Angeles Street Immigration Court

Peter A. Kim was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Kim earned a Juris Doctor in 2006 from the University of West Los Angeles. From 2007 to 2022, he was in private practice at the Law Offices of Peter A. Kim in Los Angeles where he represented noncitizens before the immigration court and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security. Judge Kim is a member of the State Bar of California.

Jennie L. Kneedler, Immigration Judge, Sterling Immigration Court

Jennie L. Kneedler was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Kneedler earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1998 from Bowdoin College and a Juris Doctor in 2004 from Yale Law School. From 2021 to 2022, she was a managing attorney in the Detained Adult Program at the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition. In 2018, she started at the American Bar Association's Commission on Immigration, where she later became the director of policy and pro bono until 2021. From 2011 to 2018, she served as a trial attorney and then as a senior trial counsel with the Federal Programs Branch, Civil Division, Department of Justice. From 2005 to 2010, she was an associate at Steptoe & Johnson LLP in Washington. From 2004 to 2005, she served as a law clerk for a United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas. Judge Kneedler is a member of the District of Columbia Bar.

Vimala S. Mangoli, Immigration Judge, Richmond Immigration Adjudication Center

Vimala S. Mangoli was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Mangoli earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1985 from Ramnarian Ruia College in Mumbai, India, and a Bachelor of Laws in 1988 from Government Law College in Mumbai. From 2004 to 2022, she worked at Catholic Charities Diocese of Palm Beach Inc., Immigrant Legal Services, in the following positions: senior immigration attorney and assistant program administrator (2007-2022); fully accredited representative (2004-2007); and volunteer (2003). From 1989 to 2002, she was a solo practitioner handling civil litigation, real estate, and corporate law in Mumbai, India. Judge Mangoli is a member of the Washington State Bar.

Jessica K. Miles, Immigration Judge, Otero Immigration Court

Jessica K. Miles was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Miles earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2007 from the University of New Mexico and a Juris Doctor in 2013 from the University of New Mexico School of Law. From 2019 to 2022, she practiced immigration law at Miles Immigration Law in El Paso, Texas, where she represented noncitizens before the immigration court and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security. From 2013 to 2018, she was an associate attorney representing noncitizens with Noble & Vrapı, PA, and she opened the firm's El Paso location in 2014. Judge Miles is a member of the State Bar of New Mexico.

James F. Polivka, Immigration Judge, Fort Worth Immigration Adjudication Center

James F. Polivka was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Polivka earned a Bachelor of Science in 2007 from Ohio State University, Max M. Fisher College of Business, and a Juris Doctor in 2012 from Cleveland State University, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. From 2014 to 2022, he served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in Atlanta, San Francisco, and Oakdale, Louisiana. From 2013 to 2014, he served as an immigration services officer with the National Benefits Center, Field Operations Division, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, DHS, in Overland Park, Kansas. Judge Polivka is a member of the Missouri Bar.

Sherease R. Pratt, Immigration Judge, Annandale Immigration Court

Sherease R. Pratt was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Pratt earned a Bachelor of Science in 1987 from Cornell University and a Juris

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Doctor in 1993 from Tulane University School of Law. From 2018 to 2022, she was a senior litigation counsel with the Appellate Court Section, Office of Immigration Litigation (OIL), Civil Division, Department of Justice (DOJ). From 2008 to 2018, she served as a trial attorney and later a senior litigation counsel with the District Court Section, OIL. In 2013, while on temporary details, she served as a trial attorney in DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Criminal Division, and as a special assistant to the Counselor to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Blue Campaign Against Human Trafficking, Office of the Secretary. From 1993 to 2008, she served as a staff attorney in the Offices of the Chief Counsel and General Counsel for the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. In 2007 and 2008, while on temporary details, she served as a special assistant U.S. attorney in both the Civil and Criminal Divisions of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. Judge Pratt is a member of the New York State Bar.

Charles N. Purnell, Immigration Judge, Richmond Immigration Adjudication Center

Charles N. Purnell was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Purnell earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1984 from the California State University, Fullerton, a Juris Doctor in 1987 from Vanderbilt University Law School, and two Master of Laws in 2001 from George Washington University Law School and Georgetown University Law School, respectively. From 2018 to 2022, he served as assistant judge advocate general/chief judge, Department of the Navy in Washington. From 2015 to 2018, he served as chief judge of the Navy and Marine Corps Trial Judiciary in Washington. From 2014 to 2015, he served as the circuit judge of the Central Judicial Circuit in Norfolk, Virginia. From 2012 to 2014, he served as commanding officer, Defense Service Office Southeast, in Norfolk. From 2010 to 2012, he served as director, Defense Counsel Assistance Program in Washington. From 2009 to 2010, he served as director, Appellate Defense Division in Washington. From 2006 to 2009, he served as assistant staff judge advocate and staff judge advocate, U.S. Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk. From 1989 to 2006, he served as a judge advocate with the U.S. Navy in the following locations: Washington Navy Yard; Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Cruiser Destroyer Group TWO; National Naval Medical Center; the Pentagon; Amphibious Squadron THREE; and Great Lakes, Illinois. From 1987 to 1989, he was an associate with Watson, Ess, Marshall & Enggas in Kansas City, Missouri. In 2023, he retired as a rear admiral from the U.S. Navy. Judge Purnell is a member of the Missouri Bar.

Taiyyeba S. Skomra, Immigration Judge, Los Angeles – N. Los Angeles Street Immigration Court

Taiyyeba S. Skomra was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Skomra earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2000 from Mount Holyoke College and a Juris Doctor in 2005 from the University of Washington School of Law. Since 2015, she has been a certified specialist in Immigration and Nationality Law from the State Bar of California, Board of Legal Specialization. From 2019 to 2022, she was a partner at SGG Immigration LLP (formerly known as Stone Grzegorek & Gonzalez LLP), and from 2011 to 2018, she was a senior associate at SGG Immigration LLP in Los Angeles. From 2007 to 2011, she practiced immigration law at the AzulaySeiden Law Group in Chicago. In 2006, she practiced immigration law with the Law Offices of Teresita Marsal-Avila in Chicago. Judge Skomra is a member of the State Bar of California.

Michelle A. Slayton, Immigration Judge, San Francisco Immigration Court

Michelle A. Slayton was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Slayton earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1994 from the University of Oregon and a Juris Doctor in 1999 from New England School of Law. From 2010 to 2022, she served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in Portland, Oregon. From 2007 to 2010, she was a solo practitioner representing noncitizens in Portland, Oregon. In 2007, she was a contract attorney in the business immigration division of Tonkon Torp LLP in Portland. From 2002 to 2004, she practiced immigration law with the Law Office of Claudia Slovinsky PLLC in New York City. From 2001 to 2002, she was an associate in the business immigration division of Epstein, Becker & Green PC in New York. From 2000 to 2001, she served as an attorney advisor at the New York Immigration Court, entering on duty through the Attorney General's Honors Program. From 1999 to 2000, she served as a judicial law clerk with the Family & Probate Court of Massachusetts in Boston. Judge Slayton is a member of the New York State Bar and the Oregon State Bar.

Richard W. VanVeldhuisen, Immigration Judge, Annandale Immigration Court

Richard W. VanVeldhuisen was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge VanVeldhuisen earned a Bachelor of Science in 1987 from Northeastern University, a Juris Doctor in 1990 from California Western School of Law, and a Master of Arts in Diplomacy and International Relations in 2004 from Seton Hall University. From 2014 to 2022, he served as the chief division counsel with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the Anchorage, Baltimore, and Norfolk Divisions, and from 2005 to 2014, he served as an assistant general counsel with the FBI in Washington. In 2012, he served as a trial attorney with the Office of International Affairs, Department of Justice. From 2001 to 2005, he served as an assistant chief counsel with the Office of the Chief Counsel (currently known as the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, in New York. From 1998 to 2001, he served as a deputy attorney general with the Division of Law, New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, in Trenton. In 2000, he was a research specialist with the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Department of State. From 1991 to 1998, he served as an assistant prosecutor with the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office in Trenton. Judge VanVeldhuisen is a member of the New Jersey State Bar.

Alysha M. Welsh, Immigration Judge, Annandale Immigration Court

Alysha M. Welsh was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Welsh earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2009 from Boston University and a Juris Doctor in 2012 from Suffolk University Law School. In 2022, she was the legal director at the University of Maryland's Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment Center for Human Trafficking Survivors in College Park, Maryland. From 2018 to 2022, she was the managing attorney at Human Rights First in Washington, D.C. From 2014 to 2018, she was an associate attorney in Boston practicing immigration law at the following firms: Joyce and Associates (2017-2018); Maiona & Ward Immigration Law (2015-2017); and The Law Offices of Saher J. Macarius (2014-2015). From 2013 to 2014, she served as an AmeriCorps legal fellow with South Coastal Counties Legal Services in Fall River, Massachusetts. Judge Welsh is a member of the Massachusetts Bar.

Sarah B. Yeomans, Immigration Judge, Sterling Immigration Court

Sarah B. Yeomans was appointed as an Immigration Judge to begin hearing cases in February 2023. Judge Yeomans earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2003 from American University and a Juris Doctor in 2007 from Georgetown University Law Center. From 2014 to 2022, she practiced immigration law at Immigration Counsel PLLC in Washington, D.C. From 2012 to 2014, she was an associate attorney in the immigration practice at the Law Office of Manuel Rivera, Esq. & Associates PC in Arlington, Virginia. From 2009 to 2012, she was a contract attorney in private practice in general commercial litigation in Washington, D.C. From 2007 to 2008, she was an associate attorney at Sharretts Paley Carter & Blauvelt PC in New York. Judge Yeomans is a member of the District of Columbia Bar and the New York State Bar.

— EOIR —

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is an agency within the Department of Justice. EOIR's mission is to adjudicate immigration cases by fairly, expeditiously, and uniformly interpreting and administering the Nation's immigration laws. Under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR conducts immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. EOIR is committed to ensuring fairness in all cases it adjudicates.