

## President's Message

by Hon. Gustavo A. Gelpí Jr.



# The Important Role of U.S. Magistrate Judges

### As a former U.S. Magistrate Judge (2001–2006) and

president of the Federal Bar Association (FBA), I put a high priority on highlighting and educating federal judges and practitioners, as well as members of the federal executive and legislative branches, about the quintessential role Magistrate Judges play in our system of justice.

The Magistrate Judge is the face of federal courts across the nation whenever a criminal defendant, his family and friends, and any victims first walk into a federal courtroom. Likewise, in an increasing number of civil proceedings, the parties will come to court for the first time to meet a Magistrate Judge in a mediation or other proceeding.

I am a huge advocate and promoter of Magistrate Judges in my court. With few exceptions, I refer every case to a Magistrate Judge for the Rule 16 conference, with instructions that settlement also be explored before the judicial officer. In addition, by way of my referral orders, I have successfully urged parties to consent to proceed before a Magistrate Judge. I could go on and on with many more examples of the invaluable help Magistrate Judges offer to District Judges. Suffice it to say, without them, in a congested district like mine, it would be extremely difficult to hold the fort and keep my criminal and civil dockets up to date.

For those reasons, one of my first steps as FBA president was to create our Task Force on U.S. Magistrate Judges. Chaired by Magistrate Judge Michael Newman from Dayton, Ohio, the task force is leading two projects. The first is this issue of *The Federal Lawyer*, devoted exclusively to Magistrate Judges. The second is a paper about the history of U.S. Magistrate Judges; how Congress and the courts

have expanded their jurisdiction and duties; and how courts can most effectively use their services to benefit the bar, litigants, and the public. My goal is for this paper to be distributed to all federal court judicial officers, as well as to members of Congress, among others.

Throughout my many years in the FBA, I have made many good friends among the Magistrate Judge ranks, including Judges Michael Newman, Michelle Burns, and Bob Bacharach (now on the 10th Circuit). Along with many other esteemed colleagues, they have unconditionally volunteered their time and effort to support the mission of the FBA.

I take this opportunity to thank Judge Newman for his months of dedicated volunteer work on this special issue. Such an effort of this scope has never been undertaken before, and it is my hope that federal practitioners will now better understand the important role that Magistrate Judges play in the operation of our nation's federal courts. I also thank two fellow Magistrate Judges who very ably assisted Judge Newman: Magistrate Judge Sidney Schenkier from Chicago, who is president of the Federal Magistrate Judges Association and Magistrate Judge Michelle Burns from Phoenix, FBA National Board member and chair of the Sections and Divisions Council. Finally, the Magistrate Judge Committee convened by Judge Newman, many of whom wrote articles in this special issue, deserves our thanks and appreciation. FBA members Magistrate Judge Camille Vélez-Rivé and attorneys Elizabeth Favret and Katharine Gardner, all belong to this committee. ©

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Gelpí Jr.", located to the right of the main text block.



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