



Judicial Profile

by Christopher P. Sullivan and Vanessa Ebode-Messi

Hon. Timothy S. Hillman U.S. District Judge for the District of Massachusetts

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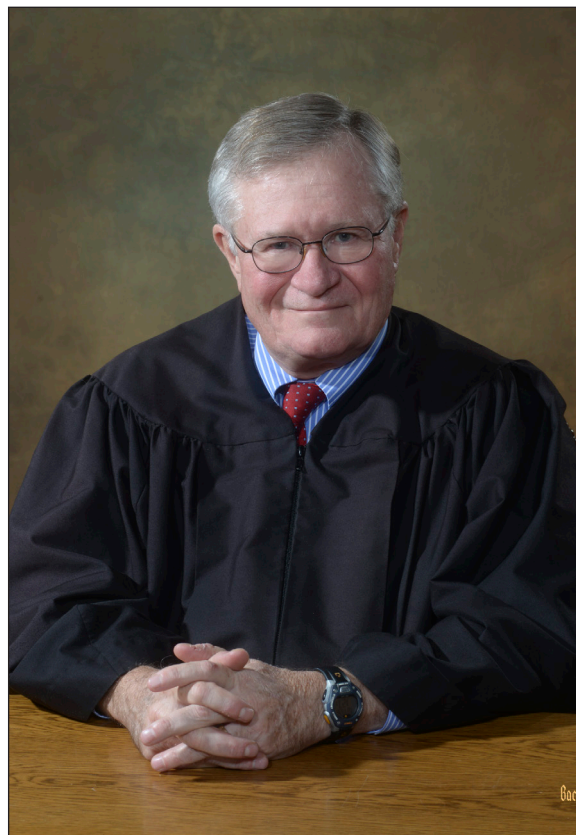
Judge Timothy S. Hillman

On Nov. 30, 2011, President Barack Obama, on the joint, bipartisan recommendation of Massachusetts Sens. John Kerry (D) and Scott Brown (R), nominated Timothy S. Hillman to the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts. The U.S. Senate confirmed his appointment on June 4, 2012, by a vote of 88-1. Judge Hillman's nomination was especially significant because of the uniquely bipartisan way in which it came about. He was nominated and confirmed in a year when almost 1 in 10 federal judgeships in the United States stood vacant, due in part to a lack of partisan collaboration.

Before being sworn in as the newest district court judge in the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts, Judge Hillman spent 23 years as a judge in the Massachusetts state court system and as a U.S. magistrate judge. Throughout his career, Judge Hillman has demonstrated his strong commitment to fairness; a willingness to learn; and an unwavering respect for the law, the litigating parties, and the attorneys who appear before him.

Early Life and Family Influences

Judge Hillman was born the son of World War II naval



veterans in Chicago in March 1948. His father served on a U.S. destroyer escort in the Pacific Ocean, and his mother served as a nurse for the U.S. Navy. At age 12, Judge Hillman's family moved to Massachusetts. He returned to the Midwest for college—earning his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1970 from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Judge Hillman returned to Massachusetts after college to attend Suffolk University Law School. He is married

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to Kay Alverson-Hillman, and they have three adult children: a daughter and two sons. When able to find a few moments of free time, Judge Hillman relishes gardening, carpentry, and other hobbies that allow him to work with his hands.

Professional Development and the Bench

Judge Hillman began his lengthy public service career as an assistant district attorney in the Worcester County District Attorney's Office in 1975. Thereafter, he went into private practice and also served as the city solicitor for Fitchburg, Mass., which helped him gain municipal law and trial expertise. Later, Judge Hillman served as solicitor for the City of Gardner, as well as counsel for the towns of Lunenburg, Athol, and Petersham, all in Massachusetts. In 1991, Judge Hillman was appointed to serve as a justice on the Massachusetts state district court. He served as the presiding justice of the Gardner District Court from 1995 to 1997 and as the presiding justice of the Worcester District Court until 1998, when he was appointed to the Massachusetts Superior Court. The judges of the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts appointed him as a U.S. magistrate judge on Feb. 13, 2006.

Judge Hillman presided over almost 1,500 cases before his nomination to the U.S. district court, and, as such, the extent of his judicial knowledge and expertise are unsurpassed. Judge Hillman has shared his knowledge with the next generation of legal professionals by teaching courses on law and psychiatry at the Massachusetts School of Law and courses on trial advocacy at Clark University.

Current Role

Judge Hillman was nominated to fill the vacancy left by Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV who moved from Worcester to Boston when Judge Nancy Gertner retired. It was fitting for him to fill a vacancy on the Worcester bench, as he spent his entire judicial career presiding over courts in the Worcester area.

The U.S. Senate responded to Judge Hillman's nomination with strong bipartisan support for his confirmation, and Senator Brown proved to be one of his champions. During Judge Hillman's confirmation proceedings, Senator Brown remarked that "[i]t was clear during [Judge Hillman's] interview that we were immediately impressed by his poise and intellect. Clearly he understands the proper role of a judge and is deeply, deeply committed to achieving justice." Senator Kerry echoed Senator Brown's statements to the assembly, advising the senators that "the President could not have nominated a more qualified person than Judge Hillman. I say that not only for myself but for a broad segment of the judicial community in Massachusetts."

Praise for Judge Hillman did not diminish after his confirmation. Judge Hillman was formally sworn in on Sept. 6, 2013, by the Hon. Mark L. Wolf, then the chief judge of U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts. All

of that court's judges attended his swearing-in ceremony, as did all of the judges from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Massachusetts. Many state court judges attended as well. Chief Judge Wolf, Judge Dennis Saylor IV, and Chief Magistrate Judge Leo Sorokin, all from the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts, Senator Brown and Rep. James McGovern (D-Mass.) each spoke highly of Judge Hillman at the ceremony, with Judge Sorokin praising his "years of judicial experience, intelligence, judgment, good humor, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to justice under the law."

Judge Hillman is equally respected by the lawyers who appear before him. Sherrard 'Butch' Hayes, co-founder and partner of Weisbart Springer Hayes, LLP, of Austin, Texas, recently had a case before Judge Hillman. Hayes said, "Judge Hillman has the ability to see deeply into complex issues, focus on the core issues, and speak to them in a considered and clear manner. He is respectful of the parties and lawyers who appear before him, and with his manner sets a great example of civility and professionalism. His courtesy is contagious in the courtroom." Echoing those comments, attorney Christopher A. Kenney of Boston has said that "Judge Hillman's practical experience, even temperament and judicial bearing engender an atmosphere in which the bench and bar work together as officers of the court to 'get it right,' protect rights, and promote justice."

Notable Achievements

Judge Hillman's smooth nomination and appointment to the district court was a result of a level of collaboration that, while perhaps uncharacteristic of the present times, was very characteristic of Judge Hillman himself. During his time on the bench, Judge Hillman has helped establish several model programs geared toward re-integrating offenders into their communities after they have served their sentences. These programs seek to empower ex-offenders to work with the judiciary and supervised release programs to take control of their futures and reduce recidivism rates in meaningful and durable ways. They have positively impacted the Massachusetts courts and surrounding communities by reducing recidivism, promoting public safety, and conserving already scarce funding for supervised release programs. As a testament to their success, these programs have been emulated by

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In 2006, Judge Hillman partnered with the U.S. Probation Office to start a re-entry court program, Re-entry Empowering Successful Todays and Responsible Tomorrows (RESTART). RESTART is a voluntary program that aims to support ex-offenders on probation or supervised release that face an elevated risk of becoming repeat offenders. Judge Hillman's RESTART program attacks the recidivism rate in Massachusetts through nonconventional, heightened ex-offender supervision. Participants who successfully complete the program through graduation are awarded a one-year reduction to the length of their supervised release.

The success of these programs lies, perhaps in part, in the philosophy with which Judge Hillman approaches his role in the courtroom. Judge Hillman firmly believes that litigants must both be, and feel, they have been full participants in the judicial system. In responding to a question posed by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) on the fair treatment of litigants in the courtroom, Judge Hillman advocated that, "Judges must remember that what we do on a daily basis is oftentimes a monumental, life-changing event for the litigants."

Judge Hillman's commitment to the community does not end when he walks out of the courtroom or with the RESTART program. His character is best illustrated by an anecdote relayed by attorney Kenneth C. Pickering of Mirick O'Connell in Worcester. Pickering recalls being in Boston several years ago to meet with a young man who needed some direction in life. After the meeting, Pickering and the young man dropped by the federal courthouse to see a criminal case and happened upon a detention hearing before then-Magistrate Judge Hillman. After the hearing, the courtroom clerk motioned them over and informed them that Judge Hillman had invited them back to his chambers. When Pickering explained the purpose of their visit, Judge Hillman launched into an abbreviated version of "scared-straight" without missing a beat. "It was wonderful," Pickering explains. Judge Hillman's outreach and concern made an enormous impression on the young man.

In his 23 years both on and off the bench, Judge Hillman has never lost sight that the law has a direct impact on people's lives or the importance of litigant participation in the judicial process to the system's ultimate success. ☉