

United States Bankruptcy Court
Northern District of Texas
1100 Commerce Street, Room 1254
Dallas, Texas 75242-1496

Chambers of
Barbara J. Houser
Chief Judge

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Dear friends and colleagues,

It is with very mixed emotions that I write this letter and announce my plans to retire as an active bankruptcy judge in the Northern District of Texas on April 30, 2020. When I agreed to take on the role as leader of the mediation team in the historic Title III cases for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and various related instrumentalities, I had hoped to finish my special assignment and then return to Dallas and my day job as a bankruptcy judge in the Northern District of Texas before finally retiring from the bench. In short, I wanted to finish my judicial career here in my home court hearing cases and working with you. Unfortunately, the issues in Puerto Rico are extraordinarily complex and it is taking longer than I had hoped it would to negotiate, confirm and implement plan(s) of adjustment for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and related instrumentalities. Much work remains to be done there; and when we will finish remains unclear.

While I have been engaged full time on Puerto Rico, covering my docket in Dallas has been challenging for a variety of reasons. Special thanks are due to my bankruptcy judge colleagues here and Judge Douglas Dodd of the Middle District of Louisiana, who handled my docket on top of their own and helped insure that your cases were heard in a timely manner. Special thanks are also due to my staff, who juggled judges and your cases with agility and without complaint. Without all of this help I would not have been able to devote my time and energy to assisting the parties in Puerto Rico.

But the uncertainty of when we can reasonably expect to be done in Puerto Rico and the challenges of covering my docket here caused me to begin to think about alternatives and what was in the best interests of all concerned. After much thought, I concluded that it made sense for me to retire so that the vacancy created by my retirement could be filled by the Fifth Circuit, who could then recall me as a bankruptcy judge so that I could finish my Puerto Rico work while on recall. This allows me to fulfill my commitment to the parties-in-interest in Puerto Rico, while ensuring that my share of the docket in Dallas is covered by the judge who succeeds me. I made this proposal to the Fifth Circuit earlier this year and the Circuit recently agreed. Accordingly, I submitted notice of my intent to retire on April 30, 2020 to the Fifth Circuit a few days ago, subject to my being recalled for purposes of finishing my Puerto Rico work.

While I announced my decision to retire as an active judge to those of you who attended the bankruptcy section meeting of the Dallas Bar Association last night, I also wanted to communicate my news to those of you who were unable to attend the section meeting. A letter is less personal than I would have preferred, but given the size of our bar and my travel commitments, there doesn't seem to be a better alternative. So, please forgive the formality of following up my personal announcement last night with this letter.

It has been a privilege to serve as an active bankruptcy judge in the Northern District of Texas for nearly 20 years. I am thankful for the opportunities I have been given to serve. While I will not see you day-to-day while serving as a recalled bankruptcy judge, I expect to continue to be involved in the insolvency community for years to come in various capacities in both Texas and nationally. I am looking forward to my leadership role as President of the American Bankruptcy Institute, which will begin shortly before I retire as an active judge. I look forward to seeing you in those venues.

With warm regards,



Barbara J. Houser
Chief United States Bankruptcy Judge
Northern District of Texas