



After nearly a century of advocacy, National American Indian Heritage Month was first recognized through joint resolution by Congress in 1990. Now recognized annually, November is a time to recognize the native peoples of America who have been an integral part of the American character and to learn more about their history, achievements, and heritage history. Native Americans continue to contribute to the legal community as follows:



DIANE J. HUMETEWA

Diane J. Humetewa, a member of the Hopi Indian Tribe located in northeastern Arizona, was the United States Attorney for the District of Arizona, serving in that position from December 2007 to August 2009. She was the first Native American female to be presidentially appointed to that position, where she presided over one of the largest U.S. Attorney Offices with one

of the highest caseloads in the nation. Humetewa is considered a national expert on Native American legal issues and has instructed law enforcement and prosecutors. She has served since 2002 as counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, as a judge pro tem on the Hopi Tribal Appellate Court, and as an ad hoc member of the Native American Subcommittee of the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

Diane J. Humetewa has been nominated to serve on the U.S. District Court for the district of Arizona as a federal judge. If confirmed, she would be the first active member of a Native American reservation, and first Native American woman to serve as a federal judge.



BILLY MICHAEL BURRAGE

Billy Michael Burrage is a former United States federal judge, and a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He was one of the first Native Americans to be appointed as a federal judge, nominated by Bill Clinton in 1994 until his resignation in 2001.

During his legal career, Judge Burrage has been committed to the Native American Community. He is a member of the Choctaw Nation, and he acted as a tribal counsel for three years. His dedication to the community also carried into his private practice, where he represented those affected by gambling issues on reservations.

Among Judge Burrage's notable decisions was a 1995 ruling against General Motors that dealt with pickup truck gas tanks that allegedly prone to explosion. He also dismissed a libel lawsuit against ABC News filed by Dallas evangelist Robert Tilton and considered a long-standing case regarding the treatment of state prisoners.



FRANK HOWELL SEAY

Frank Howell Seay was a federal judge on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Oklahoma. Seay was nominated by President Jimmy Carter in 1979 served as chief judge from 1980-1996. He assumed senior status on September 25, 2003.

Judge Seay's dedication to improving his community is evident by his service as President for the Seminole County Bar Association and as a member of the Oklahoma Uniform Criminal Jury Instruction Commission. Furthermore, in 2002, Judge Seay became a member of the United States Judicial Conference, becoming the first Native American to serve on the Conference.

Frank Howell Seay did not learn of his heritage until he was in his 50s and already on the bench. Seay's paternal grandfather was a full-blooded Native American.

As a federal judge, Seay was recognized for reversing the rulings that led to the unjust convictions of two men in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma. The John Grisham book, *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town*, depicts the story.

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