

Juan R. Sánchez

Born: 1955, in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico

Federal Judicial Service:

Judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania
Nominated by George W. Bush on November 25, 2003, to a seat vacated by Jay C. Waldman.
Confirmed by the Senate on June 23, 2004, and received commission on June 24, 2004. Served
as Chief Judge, 2018-2024.

Education:

City College of New York, B.A., 1978
University of Pennsylvania Law School (now Carey Law School), J.D., 1981

Professional Career:

Staff Attorney, Legal Aid of Chester County, Pennsylvania: 1981-1983
Private Practice: West Chester, Pennsylvania: 1983-1997
Assistant Public Defender, Chester County, Pennsylvania: 1983-1997
Trial Attorney, MacElree, Harvey, Gallagher, Featherman & Sebastian, Ltd., West Chester,
Pennsylvania: 1997
Judge, Court of Common Pleas of Chester County, Pennsylvania: 1998-2004
Member, Judicial Conference Committee on Defender Services: 2016-2022
Member, Judicial Conference of the United States: 2023-2024
Member, Judicial Conference Committee on International Judicial Relations: 2025-present

* * *

Judicial Biography

Judge Sánchez formerly served as the Chief Judge of the court and was the first Latino Chief Judge in the court's history.

He was born in Puerto Rico and moved to the Bronx in New York when he was twelve years old. He received a United Federation of Teachers Scholarship to attend City College at the City University of New York, from which he received his bachelor's degree, cum laude. He received his law degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Law, where he received the Benjamin R. Jones Award for his commitment to humanity and the law. Following law school, he received a Reginald Heber Smith Community Lawyer Fellowship and worked at Legal Aid of Chester County for two years. He went on to work as a Chester County Public Defender for about fourteen years while also maintaining a private civil practice.

His judicial career began in 1998 when he joined the Chester County Court of Common Pleas after winning a judicial election in 1997. President George W. Bush nominated Sánchez to a seat on the District Court in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania in 2003, and Sánchez was confirmed in 2004 in an unopposed vote.

In 2017, Judge Sánchez issued a landmark ruling in which he ordered Google to comply with warrants issued pursuant to the Stored Communications Act (SCA) and provide the FBI with data on servers located outside of the United States. That data included emails from the subjects of two criminal investigations. Google argued that the SCA would not apply to information on servers in other countries. However, Judge Sánchez found the location of the service provider and where the data will be disclosed were key in determining the reach of the SCA. Judge Sánchez has also presided over numerous jury trials, including high-profile public corruption and gang-related murder cases.

Judge Sánchez has been active in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania's efforts to improve jury representativeness. As Chair of the court's Jury Committee, he convened a Jury Diversity Subcommittee to evaluate the representativeness of the court's jury pools. The Subcommittee proposed four recommendations that were ultimately adopted, including adding more names to the list of potential jurors, conducting more frequent change of address checks, sending a second juror qualification questionnaire to a zip code from which a previous questionnaire has not been returned, and engaging in community education and outreach efforts to educate potential jurors on the importance of jury service. Since these changes were implemented, judges in the Eastern District have reported a greater number of people of color on juries. Judge Sánchez remains active in the court's ongoing community outreach effort on this issue.

In 2019, Judge Sánchez published a Temple Law Review article on the importance of jury diversity and his plan to make this issue a priority in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania during his tenure as Chief Judge. In the article, he pointed to instances in which the diversity of a jury (or lack thereof) has had an impact on the result of a case and expressed his belief that juries should reflect the diversity of the communities in which they sit – a position that is becoming particularly crucial with demographics changing in many areas. He also shared that diverse juries are beneficial to the legal system because more diverse juries tend to deliberate longer, ask more questions, and examine cases more thoroughly. The article concluded by describing the recommendations implemented in the Eastern District. It can be found at: (<https://www.templelawreview.org/article/a-plan-of-our-own-the-eastern-district-of-pennsylvanias-initiative-to-increase-jury-diversity/>). Judge Sánchez is also the co-author, with Judge Mark A. Kearney, of “A Federal Trial Court’s Evolving Responsibilities to the Rule of Law” in the Temple Law Review, Vol. 97:4 (Summer 2025), and with Sarah Zimmerman of “Judge Nelson A. Díaz and Latinx Leaders’ Legacies,” Temple Law Review, Vol. 96:1 (Spring 2024).