

The Honorable Esther Salas
United States District Judge

Judge Salas earned her B.A. from Rutgers University and her J.D. from Rutgers School of Law-Newark. After graduating from law school, Judge Salas clerked for the Honorable Eugene J. Codey, Judge of the Superior Court, Essex County Vicinage. In October 1995, Judge Salas entered private practice with the law firm of Garces and Grabler, P.C., where she focused on criminal defense and appellate litigation. In September 1997, Judge Salas joined the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of New Jersey. As an Assistant Federal Public Defender, Judge Salas represented indigent criminal clients in front of both the New Jersey District Court and the Third Circuit.



On November 3, 2006, Judge Salas was sworn in as a Magistrate Judge for the District of New Jersey—the first attorney of Hispanic descent to hold that position. On June 14, 2011, the Senate unanimously confirmed President Obama’s nomination of Judge Salas as a United States District Judge. Judge Salas was sworn in by the Honorable Jose L. Linares, making her the first Latina District Judge in the District of New Jersey.

As a District Judge, Judge Salas has presided over complex civil and criminal cases, including a number of issues of first impression for the District of New Jersey. Additionally, Judge Salas, along with Senior District Judge Katharine S. Hayden, co-founded the District of New Jersey Pretrial Opportunity Program, which provides pre-trial judicial intervention for criminal defendants suffering from drug and alcohol addiction.

Judge Salas has been recognized for her work on and off the bench. She has received numerous awards, including the Whipple Memorial Award from the Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of New Jersey (2008), the Women’s Initiative and Leaders in Law Platinum Award from the New Jersey Women Lawyer’s Association (2015), and Woman of Substance Award from Seton Hall University’s Women’s Law Forum (2015).

Judge Salas is a loving wife to her husband of 26 years, Mark Anderl, and the proud mother of her late son, Daniel Mark Anderl, who offered his life as an act of love when a disgruntled lawyer targeted Judge Salas because of her position as a federal judge. Since Daniel’s senseless and tragic murder, Judge Salas has made it her mission to ensure greater protections for judges. Daniel’s sacrifice, and Judge Salas’s advocacy, led to the swift passage of “Daniel’s Law” in New Jersey. To ensure that Daniel’s death will not be in vain, Judge Salas continues to advocate for federal legislation to ensure greater protections for federal judges.