

Historic Day For Diversity: Senate Confirms Two Judges, Who Are Gay, Black, To Federal Bench

by [David Badash](#) on June 17, 2014

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For the first time in history, the U.S. Senate today confirmed two judges who happen to be openly-gay, and Black, to the federal bench. Judge Darrin Gayles will serve on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and Judge Staci Yandle will serve on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois. [Lambda Legal](#), applauding the votes, noted this is “the first time that two openly gay judicial nominees have been confirmed to the federal bench on the same day.”

The White House [notes](#) that also confirmed today is Judge Salvador Mendoza, who will serve on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington. He is the first Hispanic judge to serve on his court.

“Today, it is more important than ever that our courts reflect the growing diversity of our country, but we have a long way to go,” Lambda Legal’s Fair Courts Project Manager Eric Lesh said in a statement.

“There are nearly 900 federal judges in the U.S., and most are white men. Federal courts are charged with providing everyone with equal access to justice, and yet justice has not always been a reality for some. A diverse judiciary serves not only to improve the quality of justice, but to boost public confidence in the courts.”

“President Obama has already nominated more African-American judges and openly gay and lesbian judges than any of his predecessors. With this historic confirmation, Darrin Gayles will become the nation’s first openly gay African-American man to serve on the federal bench, while Staci Yandle becomes the second openly lesbian African-American woman to be confirmed in the 20 years since President Clinton nominated Deborah Batts to the Southern District of New York.”

The *Miami Herald* [reports](#) that Judge Gayles is “the first openly gay black male jurist to sit on the bench.”

Judge Gayles is a graduate of George Washington University School of Law, and Judge Yandle is a graduate of Vanderbilt University School of Law.

Last fall, the Tea Party Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, [killed the nomination](#) of [Judge William Thomas](#), after supporting his nomination. Judge Gayles was nominated in his place.

UPDATE 2:00 PM EDT:

The White House issues a statement, [adding](#):

Today’s confirmations also set historic milestones:



For the first time in history, the Senate has confirmed two openly gay judges on the same day.

President Obama has now appointed more female judges than any other President, breaking the record previously set by President Clinton.

President Obama also has now appointed more Hispanic judges than any other President, breaking the record previously held by President George W. Bush.

As we've said before, these "firsts" — and these milestones — are important, not because these judges will consider cases differently, but because a judiciary that better resembles our nation instills even greater confidence in our justice system, and because these judges will serve as role models for generations of lawyers to come.

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Judge Salvador Mendoza, confirmed to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington, is the first Hispanic judge to serve on his court.

Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute Managing Director Torey Carter says in a statement:

"Today will be marked in history as the day the U.S. Senate confirmed two openly gay judges to the federal bench in the same day. I congratulate Judge Gayles and Stacie Yandle on this magnificent accomplishment — Gayles will be the first openly gay African American man to be confirmed and appointed to the federal bench in our nation's history and Yandle will be the first openly gay African American to serve as a federal judge in Illinois."

Hat tip: [Towleroad](#)

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A judiciary that more accurately reflects the diversity of the American people. Wow, what a concept!

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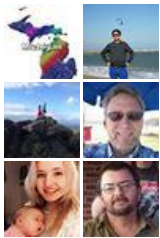


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