

Marisa J. Demeo '88
Washington, D.C.
Region II Alumni Trustee

Marisa Demeo '88 was serving as a Magistrate Judge when President Barack Obama nominated her and, in 2010, the US Senate confirmed her to serve as Associate Judge for the D.C. Superior Court. Demeo describes her work over the past decade as “ensuring that each voice is heard, no matter where a person was born or lives, no matter their socio-economic status, or whether they have an attorney or not. I strive every day to provide justice for all.”

When Demeo graduated with her degree in Politics and a Certificate from the Program in Latin American Studies, she was not yet sure what she wanted to do. She took a position as a paralegal in the Department of Justice in the Civil Rights Division. Much of her work concentrated in protecting Black voting rights in Mississippi and American Indian voting rights in New Mexico. Seeing the law “as a tool for change,” she decided to go to law school. In 1993, she received her JD from NYU, where she was selected as a Root-Tilden Scholar for her academic achievements and commitment to public interest.

With her law degree in hand, Demeo returned to the DOJ, where she served with distinction as an Honors Program trial attorney in the Civil Rights Division, litigating to create more opportunities for women, people of color, people with disabilities, and people who were practicing their religious beliefs. She also co-founded and was elected the first president of DOJ Pride, a group that worked to remove discriminatory practices against LGBT applicants obtaining their security clearance.

In 1997, when she felt national legislation was moving away from protecting immigrants' rights, Demeo made a significant shift in her career path. She went to work for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), one of the premier Latino civil rights organizations in the country, on policy issues and was soon promoted to head the D.C. office. While in that position she was recognized by the US Department

of Commerce US Census Bureau for outstanding leadership as Acting Chair of the Decennial Census Advisory Committee, an appointment made by Department of Commerce Secretary William Daley.

After seven years with MALDEF, Demeo wanted to get more involved on the local level and joined the US Attorney's Office of the District of Columbia, prosecuting street crimes. She enjoyed being in the courtroom dealing with community issues and is proud of the work she did "ensuring that the accused were treated with dignity and fairness while also ensuring that the rights of victims were fully protected." Her experience in court led her to the bench; she was appointed as a Magistrate Judge in 2007. As a Magistrate Judge, she feels she brought a different perspective, "having had opportunities to see issues from all sides."

Now as an Associate Judge, Demeo serves as a trial judge handling murders and sexual assaults. She is the co-chair of the D.C. Court's Strategic Planning Leadership Council, previously serving as Chair of the Judicial Education Committee. Demeo also has served as Chairperson of the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia Judicial Council, an organization she co-founded that focuses on broadening opportunities at the court for Latino/a/x law students.

Over the course of her distinguished career, Demeo has been recognized with numerous awards and public honors. Among the most meaningful are receiving the Congressional Black Caucus Chair's Award in 2003 in recognition of dedication, leadership, and commitment to advancing the cause of civil and human rights for all Americans and being selected by *OUT* Magazine for its Out 100 list in 2010.

Although judicial ethics rules limit the types of volunteer activities she can pursue, she has taught courses at both Howard University School of Law and Georgetown University School of Law, and she participated in both the "Every Voice" and "Adelante Tigres" alumni conferences at Princeton. In addition, Demeo, who played varsity soccer for

Princeton, continues to pass on her soccer knowledge and love of the sport through coaching young players in the D.C. metropolitan area.