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Two New Magistrates Picked for Northern District

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SAN FRANCISCO — Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathaniel Cousins and Kerr & Wagstaffe partner Jacqueline Scott Corley are set to become the next magistrate judges in the Northern District.

The pair were picked to replace San Francisco Magistrates Bernard Zimmerman and James Larson, who retire May 31.

"I share everybody's enthusiasm," Zimmerman said Thursday. "I think they'll make excellent judges."

Cousins and Corley declined to comment. The court has not officially announced their appointments, as their requisite FBI background checks are pending.

Cousins most recently has worked in the San Jose office of the U.S. attorney's office, with a focus on crime in Salinas and Monterey counties. He's also worked in the San Francisco office and before that worked in the Department of Justice's antitrust division. While in that job, he helped try a huge price fixing case against DRAM suppliers.

Corley, a former law clerk for Judge Charles Breyer, is headed back to the federal building with two years of civil litigation experience under her belt. She has done trial and appellate work, primarily in federal court, since joining Kerr & Wagstaffe in 2009. Before that, she spent 11 years as Breyer's clerk.

"She has wonderful judgment," Breyer said Thursday. "She understands the responsibilities of the magistrate judge."

Breyer noted that Corley worked with President Obama on the Harvard Law Review.

As for the outgoing magistrates, Zimmerman said he will keep much of his case load and preside over the trials on his consent docket into early 2012. He's been recalled by the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, meaning he can continue to work on cases much like a senior Article III judge.

Larson, however, said he is leaving the bench all together. He said he's interested in private judging and getting involved in criminal justice issues, such as training attorneys and counselors on the psychiatric issues of war veterans.

The start dates for Corley and Cousins have not been set.