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FMJA STATEMENT ON JUDGES ACT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The FMJA supports S. 4199 as necessary to the efficient and effective administration of justice. The JUDGES Act is data-driven and politically neutral. Despite growing caseloads, more than 20 years have passed since any new judgeships were created and more than 30 years since the last comprehensive judgeship bill. During that 20-year period, the data reflects the national median time between filing and disposition for a civil trial has increased from less than 22 months to nearly three years. In the overworked courts, the median time is four or five years, which is a travesty of justice. The data considers the number of judgeships, not whether they are vacant or filled. The existing judicial vacancies in states with anticipated new judgeships means that the judges in those districts are even further overworked.

The motivating force behind passage of this bill is the long-established and now critical need for judgeships. While senior-status district judges and magistrate judges have significantly helped relieve the stunning caseload increases, their assistance cannot be substituted for the need for additional district judgeships. Senior judges can decline certain cases or types of cases and magistrate judges are not statutorily authorized to handle certain types of cases, such as felony cases. Additionally, staffing allocations may be more limited for senior judges and magistrate judges.

The FMJA urges the JUDGES Act be passed.

Judge Shiva V. Hodges
President
Federal Magistrate Judges Association