

Many thanks to the Daily Business Review for featuring the departure of our distinguished partner Cori Lopez-Castro to pursue her longtime dream of becoming a bankruptcy judge. "My parents left Cuba many years ago and they sacrificed everything, and you can imagine their pride in having their daughter as a federal bankruptcy judge," Cori told the DBR. For the firm, her departure feels bittersweet, as she has been an incredible lawyer, leader, friend and mentor since she joined in 1990. We know she will make great contributions to the community in her new role, which is particularly significant as she becomes the first Hispanic bankruptcy judge in Florida. #ktt #corilopezcastro #bankruptcyjudge

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Corali Lopez-Castro partner with Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton.

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BREAKING: This South Florida Lawyer Just Became a Federal Judge

“My parents left Cuba many years ago and they sacrificed everything, and you can imagine their pride in having their daughter as a federal bankruptcy judge,” the attorney said.

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4 minute read

Judges



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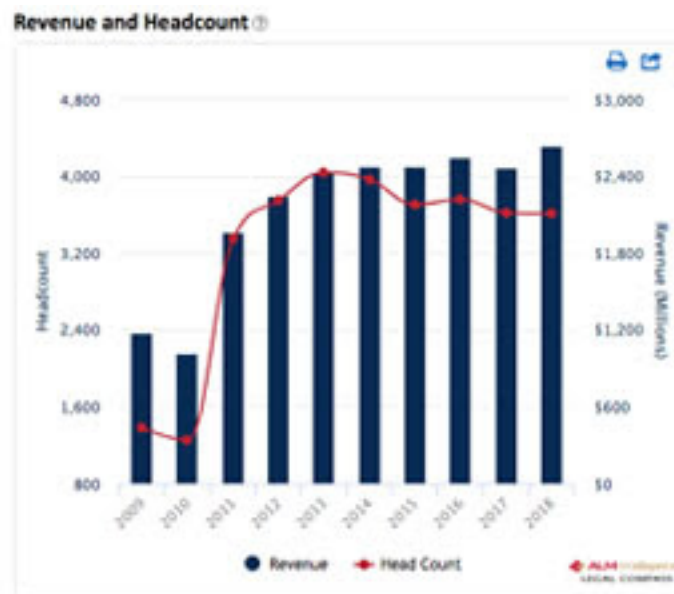
- The Coral Gables attorney will fill the vacancy created by Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Emeritus A. Jay Cristol’s retirement.
- The incoming federal bankruptcy judge said she will be sworn in within two weeks.
- She brings over three decades of experience as a bankruptcy practitioner handling cases for domestic and international clients.

A Coral Gables attorney will become the next judge to preside over cases in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Florida.

Coral Lopez-Castro, a partner at Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton, will fill the vacancy created by Chief U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Emeritus A. Jay Cristol following his retirement in January after nearly four decades of service to the federal judiciary.

Lopez-Castro said Cristol's service to the federal judiciary would be a blueprint for when she dons the black robe.

"You can imagine those who have filed for bankruptcy, a successful businessman or a very poor person, it was a hard decision to make," Lopez-Castro said. "Cristol had compassion for those that came before him and treated everyone with respect. He had wisdom on how to balance the needs of those who are owed money and those who owe the money."



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'First Hispanic Bankruptcy Judge in Florida'

Harley Tropin and the other two founding partners, John Kozyak and Chuck Throckmorton, as well as managing partner Jorge Piedra, said it is bittersweet to see Lopez-Castro assume her new role, as "she has been such an incredible lawyer, leader, friend and mentor."

"As the first Hispanic bankruptcy judge in Florida, her work in this role will have particular significance," the partners said in a statement. "Cori will be a magnificent addition to the bankruptcy bench and a huge loss to KTT, where she has made enormous contributions since she joined the firm in 1990."

Now that Lopez-Castro passed the extensive FBI background check, she said she would likely be sworn in as a federal judge within two weeks. She said her official investiture would take place before July as she coordinates a date to have her two daughters, her husband and her mother attend.

Related story: [South Florida Judge to Step Down From Federal Bench, Search to Begin for Successor](#)

Lopez-Castro was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to parents that emigrated from Cuba. She earned her bachelor's degree from Brown University in economics and graduated from the University of Miami School of Law in 1990. She started her career at Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton, where she worked for five years as an associate, before switching to Hahn Loeser & Parks as a senior associate.

However, Lopez-Castro returned to Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton within two years. Over the next three decades, she served as managing partner three times and concentrated her practice on bankruptcy and commercial litigation, such as leading the

team that confirmed the Chapter 11 plan of one of the largest distributors of smartphones, tablets and accessories to Latin America.

Throughout her time in private practice, Lopez-Castro has been appointed receiver or represented a receiver in various capacities in over 15 cases, including her position as equity receiver in a \$100 million Ponzi scheme initiated by the Securities & Exchange Commission.



U.S. Bankruptcy Judge A. Jay Cristol during his time as a lawyer for the U.S. Navy. (Courtesy photo)

In addition, Lopez-Castro has a reputation as a trailblazer, having served as the second woman president of the Cuban American Bar Association, the largest bar association in Florida.

The American College of Bankruptcy, which recognizes individuals for their professional excellence and contributions to the field of restructuring and insolvency, inducted her as a fellow in its 25th class in 2014.

Lopez-Castro follows Cristol, whose service included his duties flying radar patrol in the Korean War and two decades as a Navy lawyer; and as a federal judge, Cristol presided over the Chapter 11 reorganization cases of General Development Corp., one of the largest bankruptcy reorganization cases in U.S. history, and had an instrumental role in increasing the number of jurists in the jurisdiction from three to five and ultimately to seven to meet the rising demand for bankruptcy relief in areas such as Palm Beach County.

Lopez-Castro said as a judge, she will bring her over three decades of experience as a bankruptcy attorney. But she admitted that success, including the appointment by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, would not have been possible without her parents.

“My parents left Cuba many years ago and they sacrificed everything, and you can imagine their pride in having their daughter as a federal bankruptcy judge,” Lopez-Castro said. “That tells you that anything is possible in this country. ”