

Civil Rights Lawyer Confirmed to New York Federal Bench by U.S. Senate



After over a year of delay due to Republican opposition, the U.S. Senate has confirmed civil rights lawyer Jessica Clarke to the federal bench in Manhattan. Clarke, currently serving as the chief of the civil rights bureau in New York James' office, is President Joe Biden's fourth confirmed judicial nominee on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Clarke's experience includes enforcing fair housing laws and leading the investigation into the New York Police Department's response to the protests that followed George Floyd's death in May 2020. This investigation led to an on police used excessive force against protesters and a report recommending reforms addressing public concerns about policing in the city.

Biden nominated Clarke to the federal bench in December 2021 at the recommendation of Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, New York's senior Democratic senator. Schumer praised Clarke's "talent and dedication to the rule of law" as a "great civil rights lawyer" who will make an "excellent member of the federal bench."

Before joining James' office, Clarke served in the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division from 2010 to 2016. He worked at the law firm Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel until 2019.

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However, Clarke's nomination faced opposition from Republicans due to her role in the investigations following the Floyd protests. Some Republicans questioned a recommendation in James' 2020 report that the city decriminalize "negative contact with the police, particularly in communities of color." Clarke contributed to the report but declined to address written questions from senators on whether the recommendations reflected her philosophy.

This opposition led to Clarke's nomination failing to advance to the full Senate for a vote in the previous Congress following a tied, party-line vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee when the Senate was evenly divided 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans. After Democrats strengthened their control of the Senate in last year's elections, Biden re-nominated Clarke in January, and the Judiciary Committee advanced her nomination last month on an 11-10 vote.

Clarke's confirmation is significant in the legal world, as her experience in fighting for civil rights could significantly impact future court cases. As a federal judge, Clarke will be responsible for interpreting and applying federal law cases that could affect the lives of countless Americans.

Clarke's confirmation is a positive development for those who value civil rights and justice. Her dedication to enforcing fair housing laws and addressing public concerns about policing make her well-suited for the federal bench. V is poised to become a powerful force for good in the legal world, and her work on the federal bench will be watched closely in future years.