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# Longtime Cleveland federal clerk of court retires



By Eric Heisig, [cleveland.com](http://cleveland.com)  
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CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The longtime clerk of court and administrator for the federal court in northern Ohio is retiring after heading the office for nearly 26 years.

Geri Smith's last day is Friday. Sandy Opacich, currently the human resources director for the U.S. District Court, will take over Monday as clerk and administrator.

"Geri's done an outstanding job. She has worked hard to keep our court in the forefront of every area and has been successful at it," Chief U.S. District Judge Solomon Oliver Jr. said.

Smith, 64, of Lyndhurst said she plans to spend her retirement spending more time with her family, as well as biking and hiking. She also said she may do consulting work.

"There's never a dull moment," Smith said of her time at the federal court. "The challenge will be to continue at a slower pace, with a little more flexibility."

A ceremony honoring her time at the court was held in the federal courthouse in Cleveland on Monday.

The clerk oversees an office of employees who handling files for criminal and civil court cases. Employees also work in courtrooms to ensure accurate record-keeping during court proceedings.

Smith's time as clerk came at an interesting time for the federal courts system. Her tenure coincided with a shift from lawyers filing documents manually to filing them electronically. While many court systems still struggle with how to manage court documents online, Smith and her office, as well as other federal courts across the country, have been working at it for 20 years.

Oliver also said Smith did a "superb" job at managing the court's budget during the federal sequestration in 2013, a time when the federal government mandated spending cuts because of an impasse over the budget in Congress.

Smith was hired as clerk of court in 1991. Prior to that, she served as the office's chief deputy, as well as a law clerk and courtroom deputy for U.S. District Judge Alvin Krenzler.

Opacich was hired after a nationwide search and after all of the judges in the Northern District of Ohio gave their blessing.



Geri Smith

*Submitted*