

# Myrna Pérez

## Nominee for the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit

President Biden [nominated](#) Myrna Pérez to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit on June 15 to the seat vacated by Judge Denny Chin, who took senior status on June 1, 2021. Ms. Pérez is a civil rights lawyer who believes that voting is fundamental and has spent her career working to ensure that every American can have an equal voice in elections. As a lawyer who has litigated complex cases in state and federal courts throughout the country, she is eminently qualified to serve as an appellate jurist. If confirmed, she would be one of only two Latinx judges serving on the Second Circuit, and the court's only Latina.

### **Biography**

Myrna Pérez was born in San Antonio to parents who immigrated from Mexico, serving in the Air Force and working at the post office. The first in her family to graduate from college, she received a B.A. from Yale University in 1996 and subsequently earned her M.P.P. from the Harvard Kennedy School in 1998, where she served as the Co-Editor of the Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy and received the Robert F. Kennedy Award for Excellence in Public Service. Ms. Pérez later attended Columbia Law School, graduating in 2003. While at Columbia, she was a Lowenstein Public Interest Fellow, Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar, and became a Columbia Fellow with the American Civil Liberties Union. Prior to law school, Ms. Pérez served as a Presidential Management Fellow with the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

After receiving her law degree, Ms. Pérez clerked for Judge Anita B. Brody on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and for Judge Julio M. Fuentes on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Following her judicial clerkships, Ms. Pérez worked for the law firm of Relman, Dane & Colfax in D.C. as a Civil Rights Fellow, where she worked on issues including fair housing, fair lending, disability rights, and employment discrimination. As an example of her work, during her time at Relman, Ms. Pérez successfully [represented the Idaho Aids Foundation](#), which provided housing assistance and medical health services to people living with HIV/AIDS, when the state of Idaho threatened to cut off funding unless the Foundation gave the state unrestricted and unredacted access to patient files.

### **Legal Experience**

Ms. Pérez has led all aspects of complex litigation in both state and federal courts, including oral argument at the trial and appellate levels. She has served as counsel in at least 54 cases across the country, including the U.S. Supreme Court and numerous federal circuit courts of appeal. She played a major role in the preparation of six *amici curiae* briefs to the Supreme Court, including one

defending the Voting Rights Act in [Shelby County v. Holder](#).

Most notably, Ms. Pérez has spent the majority of her career litigating and advocating for voting rights and fair elections at the [Brennan Center's Voting Rights and Election Program](#), where she currently serves as Director. In the lead-up to the 2020 election, Ms. Pérez was a leader in the effort to ensure that voters, in the middle of the pandemic, [could vote in a safe and healthy manner](#). Among her cases, Ms. Pérez represented Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project, among others, in a [lawsuit against Florida law](#) that removed voters from rolls for minor discrepancies in registration records. The law disproportionately harmed Latino voters due to common naming conventions such as including accents and hyphens. Ms. Pérez helped the plaintiffs secure a preliminary injunction that allowed more than 14,000 otherwise eligible citizens to have their names placed back on the rolls in time for Florida's presidential primary. [Ms. Pérez](#) also successfully persuaded a [panel of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals](#) to uphold a district court ruling striking down a Texas photo ID law passed with the intent to discriminate against African American and Latino voters. Ms. Pérez also led the original challenge to the Texas law, which U.S. District Judge Nelva Gonzales Ramos described as "the strictest photo ID law in the country." She also participated, as an *amici*, in a [suit challenging the voting system](#) in the Village of Port Chester as violating the Voting Rights Act by diluting Latino votes.

In addition to leading complex litigation, Ms. Pérez has authored reports on the disproportionately [long wait times](#) at polling locations for Black and Latino Americans, the impact of disproportionate allocation of [election day resources](#), and the [challenge of obtaining voter identification](#).

### **Professional, Academic, and Service Activities**

Ms. Pérez's expertise is not only confined to public interest litigation, she also has significant experience inside and outside of academia. She has been a lecturer-in-law at Columbia Law School since 2016, teaching seminars on election law and civil rights lawyering. She also previously served as an Adjunct Professor of Clinical Law at NYU School of Law, where she taught a student seminar on Policy Advocacy and supervised student clinical work.

Further, Ms. Pérez has dedicated her non-working hours to serving others through volunteering, including feeding persons who are food insecure with Grace Community Services, teaching Bible studies to inmates with Crossroads Prison Ministries, and serving various roles at Saint Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, including Pride Coordinator and Congregation President. Ms. Pérez has been a member of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey for over 10 years and was previously the Chair of the Election Law Committee of the Association of the City Bar of New York.

Ms. Pérez has received numerous awards, including the Breaking the Glass Ceiling Award from the Leadership Institute for Women of Color Attorneys, the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Columbia Law School Latino/a Law Student Association, the League of Women Voters Making Democracy Work Award, the Puerto Rican Bar Association Excellence in Academia Award, and has been named one of 2014's "50 Hispanic Individuals" by Hispanic Business.