CAPAJA
California Asian Pacific American Judges Association
The Voice of the California Asian Pacific American Judiciary

Volume 1, Issue 11



President's Message



Whether you're into football, getting up to speed on family law, or thinking about retirement, CAPAJA has you covered! Check out the wonderful programs below organized by our hardworking committees! And if you're still deciding where to dine in San Diego, we invite you to dine with CAPAJA at our Annual Membership Dinner on October 24. There will be great company, delicious food, and unforgettable memories. We hope to see you there!

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President

Upcoming Events

Calling all football fans!

After a year hiatus, the CAPAJA Fantasy Football League is returning. We are looking for approximately 10 or 12 judges to join the League. No money is involved in any way with the League. As in the past, the only thing that we are playing for is bragging rights. The draft will be held sometime the week of September 7, 2026. If you are interested, please contact Hanley Chew at hchew@scscourt.org.

CAPAJA's Education Committee Never Rests!

Please join experienced judges Roger Chan (San Francisco Superior Court) and Cheri Pham (Orange County Superior Court) on Sept. 16 from 12:15-1:15 PM as they explain recent changes to California law relating to custody, visitation, and domestic violence restraining orders, and share their insights on how to address burnout in a family law courtroom. This discussion will be moderated by Presiding Justice Tracie Brown. RSVP by clicking this **link**. You will receive the zoom link once you RSVP.



CAPAJA Sponsored Program on Leadership

Ready to redefine what success looks like in the legal field?

Join the California Asian Pacific American Judges Association (CAPAJA) and the California Asian Pacific American Bar Association (Cal-APABA) for an empowering session: "Beyond the Ladder: Designing Leadership on Your Own Terms."

Led by facilitator & speaker Villy Wang, this workshop is specifically tailored to advancing API women in the law and taking charge of your career trajectory. All are welcome.

Date: October 15, 2026
Time: 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM
Register: **bit.ly/APIWORKSHOP2026**



Save the Date
CAPAJA Dinner and Annual Meeting

The CAPAJA Annual Membership Meeting is on October 24 at 12:45- 1:45 pm, in person during the CJA Conference weekend in San Diego and via Zoom. Also, stick around and join us for the CAPAJA Annual Membership Dinner. Even if you are not attending the conference, we invite you to celebrate with us. Our Dinner Planning Committee members Judges Selena Epley (Chair), Rohanee Zapanta, Kelly Mok, and ALJ Annie Greenleaf are busy planning an unforgettable evening, complete with fabulous party favors that are sure to be the talk of the town.



Retirement Planning for CAPAJA Members

BEYOND THE BENCH: Planning for Retirement & Life After the Judiciary

CAPAJA Members are invited to join CAPAJA's Mentoring Committee on Thursday, October 29, 2026 from 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. for a virtual meet and greet with Hon. Tam Nomoto Schumann (Ret.), Hon. Jackson Lucky (Ret.), and Teri Martinez from CalPERS. The discussion will cover CalPERS/JRS I and JRS II retirement benefits, considerations for planning ahead, and navigating the transition from the bench to arbitration and mediation. Whether retirement is around the corner or years away, it is never too soon so start planning for life beyond the bench.

Microsoft Teams meeting
Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/241849484815625?p=7SLAkDTwoeddo5tWih

Meeting ID: 241 849 484 815 625
Passcode: Fg35CJ72



New Judicial Officers

New CAPAJA Nominations and Appointments

August 7 was a big day for API appointments and nominations! Governor Gavin Newsom nominated CAPAJA Member **Judge Frederick Chung** of the Santa Clara Superior Court to the 6th District Court of Appeal. Fred was endorsed for the position by CAPAJA and previously served as CAPAJA's 6th District Representative. CAPAJA Member and endorsee **Judge Marsha Amin** of the San Diego Superior Court was nominated to serve as an Associate Justice of the 4th DCA, Division 1! Governor Newsom also appointed **Commissioner David Kim** to be a Judge of the Sonoma County Superior Court, **Commissioner Crystal Salumbides** to be a Judge of the San Diego Superior Court and **Assistant U.S. Attorney Wilson Park** to be a Judge of the

Los Angeles Superior Court. David, Crystal and Wilson have all been welcomed to their new status as CAPAJA judges and offered all of the support for which CAPAJA is so deservedly known. Welcome to your new positions, Fred, Marsha, David, Crystal and Wilson!

The number of APA federal judges continues to increase, and CAPAJA is delighted to welcome **Judge Cara Masako Porter** as a new member. She was sworn in on Aug. 13, 2026 as a judge on the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of California. Notably, she is the first Japanese Korean American appointed to the court. Her immediate position prior to her appointment to the bench was as the lead attorney in the General Counsel Unit in the Litigation Bureau at the California Franchise Tax Board. Cara, we are so pleased to welcome you to the bench and to CAPAJA!

On August 24, Governor Newsom appointed **Referee Martin Gonzalez** as a judge of the Imperial County Superior Court. Martin was endorsed by CAPAJA and previously was a Deputy District Attorney in Imperial County. Also appointed was **Binh Dang** to the Los Angeles Superior Court. Binh, who is a Deputy Public Defender, was elected as a judge in the June primary but can now join us on the bench early! Congratulations to you both, and we cannot wait to have you involved with CAPAJA!

Past Events

New CAPAJA Member Plunges into Involvement!

New CAPAJA Member Judge Haaris Syed of the Los Angeles Superior Court spoke on July 22 at a SABA/Langston/Muslim Bar event entitled "The Road to the Bench: A Conversation on Judicial Appointments and Public Service." Haaris is pictured below with the other panelists. And on July 30, he spoke at the Arab American Caucus Membership Meeting. Thanks for bringing CAPAJA to these wonderful discussions, Haaris!



From left to right: Judge Haaris Syed, Judge Altus Hudson, Deputy Judicial Appointments Secretary Adam Hoffman, and Judge-Elect Tal Khan Valbuena.

Successful Confirmation of CAPAJA Member

On Aug. 6, 2026, Judge Sonny Sandhu became Associate Justice Sandhu when he was confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments to the Fifth Appellate District (Fresno). Sonny was confirmed by a unanimous vote. We are so proud of you, Sonny!





Associate Justice Sonny Sandu (3rd from right) was supported by CAPAJA Members Judge Clifford Tong (4th from right) and Judge Jeff Mangar (2nd from right) along with other current and retired judges.

CAPAJA Past President Speaks

on Retirement Panel

On August 11, CJA Health 7 Wellness Committee and the California Judges Association presented a zoom presentation on “Creating Your Retirement Vision.” CAPAJA and CJA Past President Judge Erica Yew (Ret.), together with other speakers, put together a thought provoking program that asked participants, "Do you have a number in mind for what year you will retire?" and answered attendees' questions on how to plan for retirement from the bench. The panel examined questions many attorneys and judges face but rarely discuss openly: How much of our identity is tied to our role as lawyers and judges? How do we recognize when it is time to change course?

New Member Sworn in by CAPAJA President

On August 17, Stanley Wu was sworn in as a Commissioner by CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng. The ceremony was held at the Edelman Children’s Court, where Stanley is currently assigned. Welcome Stanley to the bench and to CAPAJA!



CAPAJA - LA Welcomes new LASC Judicial Officers

On August 21, the 2d District of CAPAJA continued its tradition of welcoming its new judicial officers with a delicious lunch with LA area CAPAJA Members. Soon-to-be Judge Irene Lee and Commissioner Stanley Wu were treated to lunch at Yang Chow Restaurant and made to feel welcome in the organization. We are so happy to have you as new members to CAPAJA, Irene and Stanley!



Clockwise from left: Judge Mike Madokoro, Commissioner Stanley Wu, Judge Sumako McCallum, Judge Linda Sun, Judge Carlos Dominguez, Soon-to-be Judge Irene Lee, Judge Janet Hong, CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng, APJ Ricardo Ocampo, and Judge Hoa Hoang.

CAPAJA Members Enjoy an Evening at the PABA's Gala

On August 25, 2026, the Philippine American Bar Association celebrated its 50th Anniversary Gala at the Omni Hotel in Los Angeles. CAPAJA members gathered together for this special occasion and enjoyed dinner, speeches, and entertainment.



From left to right: Judge Ben Reyes, Judge Cherisse Cleofe, Soon-to-be Judge Irene Lee, Judge Mike Madokoro, Judge Hoa Hoang, Judge Christine Gonong, Judge Billy Shin, CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng, APJ Ricardo Ocampo, and Judge Gary Tokumori.



From left to right: Judge Bryan Clavecilla, Judge Julian Recana, Judge Chirstine Gonong, Judge Ben Reyes, CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng, Judge Ruth Kwan (Ret.), Justice Deborah Servino, Judge Mike Madokoro, Judge Cherisse Cleofe, Judge Gary Tokumori, and APJ Ricardo Ocampo.

CAPAJA's Education Committee Organized Informative Panel on Judicial Independence

On August 26, the Committee presented another zoom program on "The Rule of Law and Judicial Independence and a review of CCP 170.6." The panel, consisting of Presiding Justice Tracie Brown, Justice Halim Dhanidina (Ret.) and Assistant Presiding Judge Jayne C. Lee, discussed recent case law on the use of blanket 170.6s and their effect on judicial independence and the rule of law.

MCBA Celebration Well Attended by CAPAJA Members

CAPAJA members came out to celebrate the Multicultural Bar Alliance of Southern California's 35th Year Anniversary on Aug. 27, 2026. Despite a record heat wave, CAPAJA members enjoyed each other's company and time with attorneys from local bar associations.



From left to right: ALJ Diane Tan (Ret.), Judge Christine Gonong, Judge Hoa Hoang, Judge Haaris Syed, Chief U.S. District Judge (Central District of CA) Dolly Gee, Judge Gary Tokumori, Judge Holly Fujie (Ret.),

Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Tiffany Tai, and Judge Mike Madakoro.

CAPAJA Members in the News

CAPAJA Members Profiled in the DJ

Judge Elaine Lu's profile in the Daily Journal begins with a funny story about cooking, her future husband, and her Chinese mother's prediction which turned out to be wrong. The article weaves in Elaine's judicial preferences for candor and preparedness with personal stories about the passing of her parents and her self-admitted "nerdy personality." Thank you for demonstrating your humility and humor in your profile, Elaine!

If you have news related to CAPAJA or our CAPAJA members, or if you have learned of a new potential CAPAJA member, please send an email to Newsletter Editor Holly Fujie at communications@capaja.org and we will feature it in the next newsletter. Photographs are encouraged!

*To pay your CAPAJA membership dues (memberships renew on Jan. 1 of each year), please click **here**.*

*CAPAJA grants scholarships to law students every year. To help support CAPAJA and the law students, please consider donating **here**.*



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