



CAPAJA March 2026
e-Newsletter Vol I, Issue 5

President's Message



What do you get when CAPAJA judges from every level of the judiciary across the state come together for a trip to Malaysia and Singapore? Excellent company, enriching educational programs, cultural experiences, and meaningful connections. All attendees return with a lifetime of memories and lasting friendships. Organized by the CAPAJA Travel Committee, this recent trip highlights the dedication and hard work of our committees, as well as the benefits of CAPAJA membership. March marks our



membership drive and an opportunity to support CAPAJA's valuable programs, including travel opportunities, education, networking, mentorship, and community engagement. We invite you to renew your membership and consider donating to the CAPAJA Student Scholarship fund.

Below are some photos of the Malaysia/Singapore travel, but be on the lookout for a separate newsletter with more pictures and a recap of the trip experience.

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President





MARCH IS MEMBERSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP DRIVE MONTH



PAY YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES

CAPAJA works hard throughout the year to provide our members with interesting and valuable events and programming, to support and assist our members to become excellent bench officers, and to engage with the API, law school, and legal communities. So that we can continue providing these wonderful benefits, we ask that all members pay their annual dues (membership is based on the calendar year). Below are the different levels of membership:

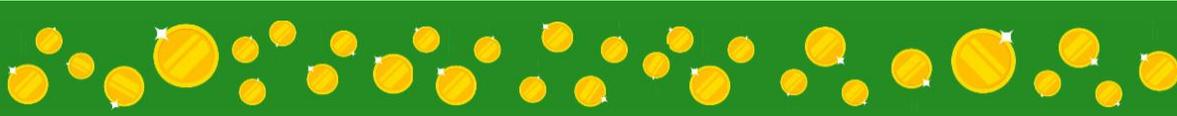
- Active bench officers' annual dues: \$50
- Active bench officers' lifetime membership (no need to remember if you paid your dues or not!): \$500
- Retired bench officers' annual dues: \$25
- Retired bench officers' lifetime membership: \$100

There are several ways you can pay your membership dues:

- By CJA website (when you are paying your CJA dues):
<https://www.caljudges.org/renewPayDues.asp>

- By PAYPAL: Go to <https://www.capaja.org/about> and scroll to the bottom. On the bottom right, click your membership option (lifetime, regular, retired lifetime, or retired regular) and then click “Add to Cart.” If you decide to use the PayPal account, we would appreciate it if you considered adding the service charge to your payment so CAPAJA receives the full dues amount.
- By ZELLE: zelle name: treasurer@capaja.org (please note that the CAPAJA website provides an outdated zelle name - the correct zelle name is treasurer@capaja.org)
- By CHECK: payable to “CAPAJA” and mail to CAPAJA at 11138 Del Amo Blvd. #453, Lakewood, CA 90715-1103

Whether you are joining as a new member or renewing your membership, please submit a CAPAJA form when you pay your dues. You can complete the form online by clicking: [Online Form](#). Or you can print out the form by clicking ([Printable Form](#)) and email it to capaja@capaja.org or mail it to CAPAJA at 11138 Del Amo Blvd. #453, Lakewood, CA 90715-1103.



DONATE TO THE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

CAPAJA will once again be awarding \$2500 scholarships to two deserving law students who currently or intend to serve as a judicial clerk, intern, or extern in a California court. We are pleased to foster the growth of students who share our goals of promoting diversity in the bench and bar, improving the administration of justice, and ensuring access and fairness for all who use the courts. Donations are tax deductible. Please consider contributing to the CAPAJA Scholarship Fund.



[DONATE ONLINE](#)

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By Check: Payable to “Robert Takasugi Fellowship - CAPAJA Scholarship” and mail to CAPAJA, 11138 Del Amo Blvd. #453, Lakewood, CA 90715-1103.



CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Know of a good restaurant in Palm Desert? Do you like to plan dinner parties? Volunteer to be CAPAJA's Social Chair for the California Judges Association Spring Conference in Palm Desert. The Social Chair will be responsible for suggesting the venue and organizing our membership dinner, which is scheduled for May 1, 2026. If interested, please contact us at capaja@capaja.org by March 10!

Thank you for your support!

UPCOMING EVENTS



CAPAJA Program on CJA Membership for ALJs

Join us on March 10 from 12:15 to 1:15 for an engaging webinar designed especially for California State Administrative Law Judges! Discover how membership in the California Judges Association (CJA) supports and elevates your judicial career through advocacy, professional development, and community. Hear firsthand insights from Ret. Judge Erica Yew, who will share her perspective on the value of belonging to a unified judicial voice, and CJA Executive Director Nicole Bautista, who will highlight key member benefits and upcoming initiatives. Don't miss this opportunity to connect, learn, and see how CJA works for you. Below is the link for registration.

To join the Zoom Meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88592751895?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88592751895?pwd=Eo1icXxoTlhNFEM4L32YbjjqbxP7us.1)

[pwd=Eo1icXxoTlhNFEM4L32YbjjqbxP7us.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88592751895?pwd=Eo1icXxoTlhNFEM4L32YbjjqbxP7us.1)

Meeting ID: 885 9275 1895

Passcode: 949595



CAPAJA Member to give Keynote Speech at APALIE's Dinner

If you are able, please join CAPAJA member Judge Glenn Yabuno at the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Inland Empire (APALIE) dinner on April 30, 2026. It will be at 5:30 pm at the California Citrus State Historic Park. Glenn will be the keynote speaker.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



CAPAJA is proud to announce the appointment of Judge Sharon Cho, San Mateo County, as a Co-Chair of CAPAJA's Law Student Outreach (LSO) Committee. She joins our team of the hard-working LSO Committee co-chairs: ALJ Dorothy Chou Proudfoot, Judge Timothy Saito, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino. Congratulations, Judge Cho, and thank you for your dedication and service.

NEW CAPAJA JUDICIAL OFFICERS



NEW CAPAJA JUDICIAL OFFICERS

On February 19, Governor Gavin Newsom nominated CAPAJA Member Justice Joanne Motoike of the 4th District Court of Appeal, Division 3 to be Presiding Justice of that Division. The news was announced just in time for Orange County Asian American Bar Association Members to celebrate the appointment of the first API

Presiding Judge in the 4th DCA at the OC AABA Gala that night. Congratulations, Joanne - we are so proud of you!

Speaking of firsts - that same day, Governor Newsom appointed the first Vietnamese American to sit in the Riverside County Superior Court as a Judge, Thanh Ngo. Thanh was a Deputy District Attorney until his appointment. Welcome to the bench and to CAPAJA, Thanh!



Fourth District Court of Appeal, Division Three



Joanne Motoike, of Orange County, has been appointed to serve as the Presiding Justice of the Fourth District Court of Appeal, Division Three. Motoike has served as an Associate Justice in the Fourth District Court of Appeal, Division Three since 2022. Motoike served as a Judge in the Orange County Superior Court from 2013 to 2022. She served as a Senior Deputy Public Defender at the Orange County Public Defender's Office from 2008 to 2013. Motoike worked as a Trial Attorney at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal from 2006 to 2008. She served as a Deputy Public Defender at the Orange County Public Defender's Office from 1994 to 2006. Motoike received a Juris Doctor degree from Loyola Law School. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Presiding Justice Kathleen E. O'Leary. This position requires confirmation by the Commission on Judicial Appointments, which consists of Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and Senior Presiding Justice Manuel Ramirez. Motoike is a Democrat.

Riverside Superior Court



Thanh Ngo, of Riverside County, has been appointed to serve as a Judge in the Riverside County Superior Court. Ngo has served as a Deputy District Attorney at the San Bernardino District Attorney's Office since 2023. He worked as a Field Counsel at Liberty Mutual Insurance from 2022 to 2023. Ngo served as the Assessment Appeal Policy Director at the Alameda County Assessor's Office from 2020 to 2021. He worked as a Trial Attorney at TDN Law Group from 2013 to 2019. Ngo served as a Deputy District Attorney at the Santa Clara District Attorney's Office from 2006 to 2013. He served as an Assistant District Attorney at the Santa Cruz District Attorney's Office from 2001 to 2005. He worked as an Associate at Terra Law from 2000 to 2001. Ngo served as an Assistant District Attorney at the San Francisco District Attorney's Office from 1996 to 2000. He worked as an Echoing Green Fellow at the Asian Law Caucus from 1994 to 1996. Ngo received a Juris Doctor degree from the University of California Los Angeles, School of Law. Effective March 24, 2026, he fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Kira K. Klatchko. Ngo is a Democrat.

Source: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/02/19/governor-newsom-announces-judicial-appointments-2-19-2026/>





An extra reason to celebrate at the Orange County Asian American Bar Association Lunar New Year Dim Sum and Membership Mixer held on Feb. 19, 2026. Just hours before, it was announced that Justice Joanne Motoike had been nominated to be Presiding Judge of the Fourth District Court of Appeal, Div. 3.

Top row: Judge Bryan Clavecilla, Judge June An, Newly Appointed Presiding Justice Joanne Motoike, and Commissioner Robert Kohler

Bottom row: Judge Randy Ladisky, Commissioner Tiffany Poncy, and Presiding Judge Sheila Hanson



On February 2, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed two new API judges. Allison Chan was appointed to the OC Superior Court. Allison has served as Senior Deputy Public Defender at the Orange County Public Defender's Office since 2025, and she was a Deputy Public Defender from 2013 to 2024. Christopher Hu was appointed to fill the vacancy of the late CAPAJA Member Andrew Y.S. Cheng on the San Francisco Superior Court. Christopher has been a Deputy Solicitor General of the California Department of Justice and was mentored in the appointment process by CAPAJA Member Justice Danny Chou.

Orange Superior Court



Allison Chan, of Los Angeles County, has been appointed to serve as a Judge in the Orange County Superior Court. Chan has served as the Senior Deputy Public Defender at the Orange County Public Defender's Office since 2025, where she also served as a Deputy Public Defender from 2013 to 2024. Chan received a Juris Doctor degree from Loyola Law School. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Erick L. Larsh. Chan is a Democrat.

Source: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/02/02/governor-newsom-announces-judicial-appointments-2-2-2026/>

San Francisco Superior Court



Christopher Hu, of San Francisco County, has been appointed to serve as a Judge in the San Francisco County Superior Court. Hu has served as a Deputy Solicitor General at the California Department of Justice since 2023. He worked as an Associate at several firms, including Horvitz & Levy from 2019 to 2023, Moskowitz Appellate Team from 2018 to 2019, and at Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld from 2015 to 2018. He served as a Law Clerk at the California Supreme Court from 2014 to 2015 and at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 2013 to 2014. Hu received his Juris Doctor degree from Stanford Law School. He fills the vacancy created by the death of Judge Andrew Y.S. Cheng. Hu is a Democrat.

Source: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/02/02/governor-newsom-announces-judicial-appointments-2-2-2026/>



The federal bench welcomes two new CAPAJA Members. Magistrate Judge Ajay Krishnan has been selected to sit on the US District Court for the Northern District of California. Until his swearing-in as a judge in January, Magistrate Judge Krishnan was

a partner at Kecker, Van Nest & Peters. Ajay was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of CAPAJA Member Chief Magistrate Judge (ret.) Donna M. Ryu.

On February 6, new CAPAJA Member Anna Park was sworn in as a Magistrate Judge for the U.S. District Court for the Central District - Western Division. Before taking the bench, Anna was with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

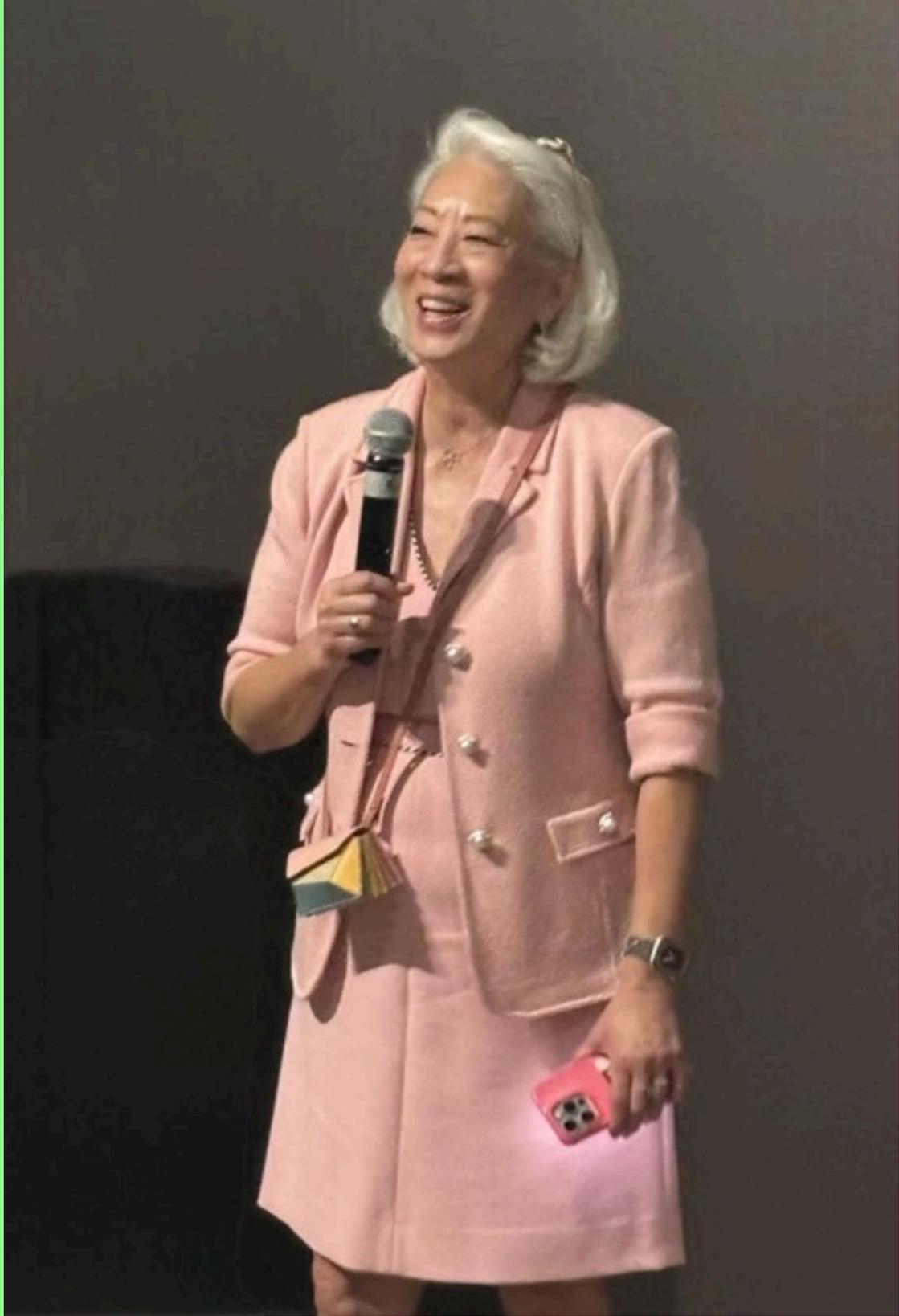
All five new judges have been welcomed into membership by CAPAJA and have enthusiastically expressed their interest in becoming active with our wonderful organization. Congratulations and welcome to the bench and CAPAJA, Thanh, Allison, Christopher, Ajay and Anna!

PAST EVENTS



Past CAPAJA President Given Amazing “Retirement” (See article below in News section) Party!

The “retirement” on January 23 of Past CAPAJA President Erica Yew was celebrated at a standing room only night at the Institute of Contemporary Art in San Jose. Among the speakers were two of CAPAJA’s other past presidents, Judges Audra Ibarra and Jayne Lee. Audra spoke about the incredible amount of community service to which Erica has devoted her time, including four major statewide committees on which she served at the behest of CAPAJA Member Chief Justice of California (ret.) Tani Cantil-Sakauye. Jayne spoke of the mentorship that Erica has provided to each one of those in the packed room, especially when they could not see the future clearly for themselves. At the end, Erica’s husband spoke about how she makes him and each of us a better person every day. It was an evening to remember!



Judge Erica Yew addresses her crowd of well-wishers who congratulated her on her retirement and applauded her new career choice.



Past CAPAJA President Judge Audra Ibarra speaks about Erica's positive impact on the courts.



Past CAPAJA President Jayne Lee gave personal examples of how Erica has touched all of our lives.



(Left to right) Judge Jacqui Doung (Santa Clara), Judge Cynthia Chen (Santa Clara), Judge Vinita Bali (Santa Clara), Judge Fred Chung (Santa Clara), Santa Clara County Supervisor Betty Duong, Judge Sunil Kulkarni (Santa Clara), Judge Erica Yew (Santa Clara), Santa Clara County Supervisor Otto Lee, Judge Audra Ibarra (Santa Clara), Judge Elizabeth Mannasau (Santa Clara), Judge Jayne Lee (San Joaquin), Judge Nahal Irvani-Sani (Santa Clara), Justice Shama Mesiwala (Third District Court of Appeal), Judge Johnny Gogo (Santa Clara), and Judge Ben Reyes (Contra Costa)



CAPAJA Members Attend UCLA Law AAPI Event

On January 29, CAPAJA Members attended UCLA School of Law's 2026 AAPI Community Dinner with Dean Michael Waterstone. The program, which was held at UCLA's Meyer & Renee Luskin Conference Center, included a special panel discussion on AI and emerging technology and how those innovations are reshaping the legal profession. Judge Jacqueline Nguyen (US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit) spoke as one of the panelists about AI in the courtroom.



From left to right: Judge Alexander Giza, Judge Sumako McCallum, Judge Terry Truong, Judge Phu Nguyen, Judge Hoa Hoang, Judge Christine Gonong, Judge Michelle Ahnn, Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Jacqueline Nguyen, and Judge Bryant Yang. Go Bruins!

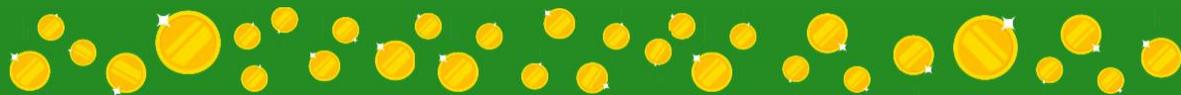


CAPAJA Member honored as Judicial Officer of the Year

As we mentioned in our newsletter last month, Judge Tiffany Tai was honored on January 31, by the Southeast District Bar Association as its 2026 Judicial Officer of the Year. The Host for the Gala was also a CAPAJA Member, Judge Lee Tsao of the LASC. CAPAJA members and Judges from the Southeast District gathered to celebrate this moment with Tiffany. Congrats again Tiffany!



From left to right: Judge Andrea Davalos, Judge Ruth Kwan, Judge Tiffany Tai, Judge Ann Park, Judge Lee Tsao, and Judge Susel Carrillo-Orellano



CAPAJA Members on Panels at Law School

On January 31, CAPAJA Members Judge Johnny Gogo and Judge Vinita Bali of the Santa Clara Superior Court spoke to professors and students at the Santa Clara Law School as part of a Judges Panel to discuss the importance of legal research and writing and their paths/journeys to the bench. As the Director of the Law School's Conflict Resolution Program wrote: "Judge Gogo and Judge Bali, thank you for all you do for our students! The insights and experiences you shared were so valuable for our 1L students." Thank you, Johnny and Vinita for bringing CAPAJA magic to these students!



Judge Johnny Gogo (front row 2nd from left) and Judge Vinita Bali (front row, 3rd from left) pictured with participants of the Judges Panel at Santa Clara Law.



The Law School Outreach Committee Participates in Mentoring Event

On February 4, 2026, CAPAJA members Hon. Marsha Amin and Hon. Mark Cumba of the San Diego Superior Court participated in the Judicial Speed Mentoring event hosted by the South Asian Law Society of Cal Western School of Law. The event was a success and brought together members of the judiciary and law students for an interactive evening of small group discussions and socializing over dinner with Indian cuisine.



Judge Marsha Amin (top row, 2nd from left) and Judge Mark Cumba (top row, 2nd from right) pictured with other judges and students who participated in the speed mentoring session.



Recent Trailblazers in the Law Program Co-Sponsored by CAPAJA

On February 4, CAPAJA co-sponsored a zoom panel with APABA and other bar groups which featured Washington State Attorney General Nick Brown, U.S. Representative Derek Tran, LASC Presiding Judge Sergio Tapia II and CAPAJA Member Judge Dena Coggins of the U.S.D.C., E.D. CA. The discussion was moderated by Past CAPAJA President Holly Fujie of the LASC (ret.). The panel covered a wide range of topics including finding the courage to blaze trails where no one has gone before, Imposter Syndrome, dealing with setbacks, and finding mentors. The panelists openly shared their wisdom and experiences with approximately 70 law students, young lawyers and judges. Another example of CAPAJA reaching out to the community!



CAPAJA Celebrates Fred Korematsu Day

CAPAJA Members helped celebrate Fred Korematsu Day at the San Mateo County Courthouse on two days: one day for high schoolers and one for 4th and 5th graders. CAPAJA Members who organized and participated in this lively event included Judges



Judge Roberta Hayashi addresses a packed courtroom of students on Korematsu Day.



Judge Renee Reyna (2nd from right) and Justice Danny Chou (far right) pose for pictures with other volunteers on Korematsu Day.



CAPAJA Members Judge Michael Mau (fourth from the right) and Justice Danny Chou (second from the right) take a break with other volunteers at Korematsu Day.



CAPAJA Members Participate in Discussion on Barriers to Women Litigators

On Feb. 5, 2026, Judge (ret.) Erica Yew and Judge Renee Reyna were part of a panel discussion “Beyond the Myths: Women Redefining What It Takes to Litigate.” This virtual event was hosted by the Alameda County Bar Association and also featured Justice Carol Corrigan. The panelists shared how they navigated barriers in their careers and the rewards of building a litigation career. Thank you, Erica and Renee for motivating the next generation of attorneys!



CAPAJA Members at JABA with Justice Sotomayor

On February 9, CAPAJA Members gathered at the Bonaventure Hotel in L.A. to attend the Japanese American Bar Association’s Annual Installation and Awards Banquet. Justice Sonia Sotomayor initiated a freewheeling (within the limits of her security detail!) question and answer session - bringing her own special blend of sincerity, candor and spirit to the event. She also gave a shout-out to her former law clerk, CAPAJA Member Judge Curtis Kin of the LASC.



Back row: Judge Grace Kim, Justice Elwood Lui, Judge (ret.) Fred Fujioka, Judge Alex Sario, Judge Curtis Kin, and Judge Haaris Syed,

Middle: Judge Evan Kitahara, Judge Alison Matsumoto, Justice (ret.) Kathryn Doi Todd, Judge Susan Jung Townsend, Judge Hoa Hoang, Justice Audra Mori, Judge Timothy Saito, and Judge Mike Madokoro

Front: Judge Terry Truong, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge (ret.) Holly Fujie, and Judge Wendy Cheng



Back row: Judge (ret.) Fred Fujioka, Judge Evan Kitahara, Judge Curtis Kin, Judge Alex Sario, and Judge Haaris Syed,

Middle: Justice (ret.) Kathryn Doi Todd, Judge Susan Jung Townsend, Judge Hoa Hoang, Justice Mark Hanosono, Judge Alison Matsumoto, Justice Audra Mori, Judge Timothy Saito, and Judge Mike Madokoro

Front: Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Grace Kim, Judge Wendy Cheng, Judge Terry Truong, and Judge (ret.) Holly Fujie.



**CAPAJA Member Hosts
Mentoring Event in San Diego**

On February 11, CAPAJA Member Judge Mark Cumba of the San Diego Superior Court hosted a brown bag lunch in his chambers in conjunction with the San Diego Asian American Legal Education Fund, a non-profit founded in 2021 to honor the legacy of the late San Diego attorney Peter Quon, Jr. Like Peter, SDAALEF is dedicated to promoting the development, advancement and leadership of Asian American law students and attorneys in the San Diego area through mentorship, scholarships and community partnerships. Those attending the brown bag in Mark's chambers included board members of SDAALEF as well as six law students from local law schools.



Judge Mark Cumba (front row, 2nd from left) with API law students and attorneys at a brown bag lunch which he hosted in his chambers.

IN THE NEWS



CAPAJA Past President Retires from Court and Joins American Leadership Forum - Silicon Valley

CAPAJA Past President Judge Erica Yew retired from the Santa Clara Superior Court as of January 23 and became the new CEO of American Leadership Forum - Silicon Valley effective February 1. In its announcement of Erica's appointment, the ALF - Silicon Valley described her as "a tireless advocate for fairness in our courts, a dedicated co-chair of the ALF AAPI affinity group, and a compassionate leader

respected by the business, non-profit, public sector, and faith communities that make up ALF's membership." As part of the announcement by ALF, Erica said, "I am excited and honored to join ALF Silicon Valley's staff and Senior Fellows in continuing and growing American Leadership Forum's legacy of collaboration and impactful leadership." Erica - CAPAJA is proud of your accomplishments on the bench and your work for CAPAJA and we look forward to hearing of your future successes in this next phase of your career.

ALF's press release: https://www.alfsv.org/wp-content/uploads/ALF-Silicon-Valley_Yew_Press-Release_012726.pdf



Several CAPAJA Members Profiled by the Daily Journal in Feb.

Several CAPAJA members and their accomplishments on the bench were highlighted by the Daily Journal this month.

In his Feb. 5, 2026 profile, CAPAJA Member Judge Safaan Ahmed talked about his father who provided this rule to live by: "When you leave this world, you should be able to look back on your life and say that you did everything you could to make the world a better place than when you came into it." This guided Safaan in his path to law school, his work as a Los Angeles Deputy District Attorney, and now on the bench as he presides over juvenile dependency cases. The attorneys who spoke to the DJ about Safaan remarked on his diligence and his calm, professional demeanor. Great profile Safaan!

Judge Roger Ito, Norwalk's longest-serving felony judge in Norwalk was featured on Feb. 10. Judge Ito primarily handles felony trials, but once a week, he handles civil personal injury cases. Attorneys appearing before Judge Ito on civil and criminal matters were interviewed for the article, and they all recognized him for his preparation, even-temper, and fairness. Thank you Roger for doing double duty and handling both criminal and civil cases!

Judge Renuka George, who has been on the bench for two years, described to the Daily Journal her path to the bench which included working as a policy analyst for then-San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom which led to law school, working at a private law firm, working for the California Department of Justice, and then to a judicial appointment by now-Governor Newsom. In the article, Judge George discusses the diversity within India and explains that the state of Kerala, where her family is from, is largely Christian and has many English speakers. Judge George is praised for being tough in a judicially appropriate manner when handling the strong personalities of the lawyers who appear before her. Renuka, CAPAJA is proud of your ability to control your courtroom even though you are early in your judicial career!

In his profile on Feb. 24, Judge Michael Whitaker analogizes his work to that of an air traffic controller - "[My] job is not to fly the plane. [My] job is to make sure it takes off." The attorneys know that Judge Whitaker requires preparation and that the attorneys comply with his trial preparation orders. Several of Judge Whitaker's high profile cases are noted in the article, but he makes clear that every case, irrespective of

who the parties are, requires his attention and the fair application of the law. Michael, thanks for your dedication to the law!



Out Best Wishes to you all in this Year of the Horse,

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President

Nathan Vu, CAPAJA President-Elect

If you have news or know of a CAPAJA-sponsored event, or of any CAPAJA member who has been or will be honored, has spoken or will speak at an event, has written an article or is taking a new position, or if you learn of a new potential CAPAJA member or an event that may be of interest to CAPAJA members, please send an email to Newsletter Editor Holly Fujie at communications@capaja.org and we will feature it in the next newsletter. Photographs are always welcome!

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