

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE





As I close out my term as President, I am filled with heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to serve CAPAJA and to work alongside the talented and dedicated colleagues on our Executive Board, our committees, and throughout our membership. Together, we have advanced CAPAJA's mission to increase access to justice and promote diversity in the legal profession.

We launched an electronic newsletter that keeps our community informed, celebrates the achievements of our members, and inspires action. It is only fitting that this month's edition is filled with news and acknowledgments that reflect our members' remarkable work.

We have expanded opportunities for involvement and leadership within CAPAJA. We established the Retired Judges Committee, co-chaired by retired Judges Roberta Hayashi and Delbert Gee. We welcome

and mentor new bench officers through several programs, including our Dine with CAPAJA gatherings. And we continue to offer engaging workshops and events that educate, inspire, and support our members.

We are especially proud to celebrate our members' promotions and accomplishments. This month, two of our members will make history as the first Asian Pacific American (APA) judges elected Presiding Judge in their respective counties: Judge Ricardo Ocampo (Los Angeles) and Judge Joni Hiramoto (Contra Costa). Contra Costa will also become the first county with two APA judges in its top leadership positions, as CAPAJA Executive Board member Judge Ben Reyes has been elected Assistant Presiding Judge.

There is much more to share at our membership meeting and to celebrate at our annual dinner on October 24. We hope you will join us.

Thank you, CAPAJA members, for the privilege of serving you. I am grateful to President-Elect Nathan Vu for his support throughout the year, and I look forward to his leadership of this vibrant and dedicated organization.

With gratitude,

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President



CAPAJA EVENTS & NEWS



INTRODUCING CAPAJA'S NEW RETIRED JUDGES COMMITTEE!

We are pleased to announce the formation of the new CAPAJA Retired Judges Committee, co-chaired by **Retired Judges Roberta Hayashi and Delbert Gee**. Roberta retired from the Santa Clara County Superior Court in April 2026 and now serves as an arbitrator with Signature Resolution. Delbert retired from the Alameda County Superior Court in 2022 and is enjoying retirement life, including spending precious time with his adorable grandson. Don't they look so happy? Stay tuned for the exciting programs

and events the committee has in store. They can be reached at retiredjudges@capaja.org . Please contact them if you are interested in joining the committee or be placed on their email listserv.







Help the Travel Committee

Plan a Los Angeles weekend!

The CAPAJA Travel Committee is planning a weekend in Los Angeles for late April/early May 2027. Tentative plans for the weekend will include a CAPAJA Friday night dinner, a Saturday docent-led tour of the newly renovated Japanese American National Museum followed by a sake-and-sushi reception, and closing with a Sunday brunch. To assist us in our planning, please reply to the following survey by **October 9, 2026.** - **Survey Link**





Join Us for the CAPAJA Dinner and Annual Meeting

The CAPAJA Annual Membership Meeting is on Saturday October 24 at 12:45-1:45 pm, in person during the CJA Conference weekend in San Diego (location TBA) and via Zoom (instructions to follow).

Also, stick around and join us for the CAPAJA Annual Membership Dinner.

CAPAJA invites APA judicial officers and their spouses/significant others/family to join San Diego APA judicial officers for a special CAPAJA dinner on Saturday, October 24, 2026 at 6:00 PM. The location will be the Lotus Thai restaurant located at **906 Market Street, San Diego, CA 92101** (which is about a 16-minute drive from the CJA conference hotel); the restaurant will be closed to the general public during our dinner.

For only $25 per person, guests will be served two kinds of soup (Tom Yum with tofu and Tom Kha with chicken), appetizer platters, papaya salad and an entrée of their choice (either a stir-fry, noodles, fried rice or a curry with protein options) and dessert (mango with sweet sticky rice). The Tom Yum with tofu soup, some of the appetizers and the dessert will be vegan and vegan entrees are available. Additional menu items and beverages will be available for purchase.

San Diego style goody bags and prizes for the winners of the APA judicial officers trivial contest will be provided. Many thanks to the CAPAJA board for its generous financial support for the event (which makes the $25 per person price possible for a meal that costs $77 per person!).

Please RSVP no later than October 13, 2026, but note that due to space limitations we may "sell out" way before then. Please email Judge Selena Dong Epley at Selena.Epley@sdcourt.ca.gov if you have any questions!

Link to register for the dinner: RSVP 2026 Welcome CAPAJA Dinner



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. Register: **link**

Date: October 15, 2026

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM



NEW JUDICIAL OFFICERS



CAPAJA Member Nominated for 2d DCA

On September 18, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that he is nominating CAPAJA Member **Judge Alexander Giza** to be an Associate Justice of the California District Court of Appeal for the 2d District of California, Division 3. Alex, who has been a Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court since 2019, received his JD from UCLA School of Law and practiced at Irell & Manella, Russ, August & Kabat and Hueston Hennigan before his appointment to the bench. Congratulations to Alex and to the State of California for this wonderful appointment!

CAPAJA member Judge Alex Giza will have his confirmation hearing to be an associate justice with the Second Appellate District, Division Three before the Commission on Judicial Appointments on Friday, October 9, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. Judge Giza would like to invite CAPAJA members to the proceedings either in person in San Francisco or watch via the live stream at **https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/**. If confirmed, Judge Giza will join another CAPAJA member, Justice Mark Hanasono in Division Three!





New CAPAJA Member in Santa Clara County

Also on September 18, the Governor appointed **Chhaya Malik** to the Santa Clara Superior Court. Chhaya is the Deputy Director for Dispute Resolution at the California Civil Rights Department and graduated from U.C. Berkeley School of Law. She has received a warm CAPAJA welcome to the judiciary and is looking forward to becoming involved in CAPAJA's activities.





New CAPAJA Commissioner in LA

The judges of the Los Angeles Superior Court have elected **Jacqueline Wing Phillips** as a LASC Commissioner. Jacqueline comes to the Court from her position as a Supervising Attorney at the Children's Law Center of LA and graduated from USC Law. She has been welcomed to membership in CAPAJA and offered mentorship and involvement in our wonderful organization! Welcome to the Court, Jacqueline!



CAPAJA MEMBERS IN THE NEWS



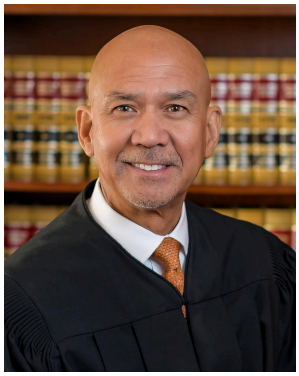
2 CAPAJA Members to Lead Contra Costa Court!

On September 22, the Contra Costa Superior Court announced its 2027-2028 judicial leadership team and CAPAJA was thrilled to learn that both the Presiding Judge and the Assistant Presiding Judge offices will be held by CAPAJA Members! CAPAJA Past President **Judge Joni Hiramoto,** who has been serving as CoCo County's APJ will become PJ on January 1, 2027, and the new Assistant Presiding Judge will be the co-chair of CAPAJA's Judicial Appointments Committee **Judge Benjamin T. Reyes II.** The press release can be found **here**.

Congratulations to Joni and Ben on their new positions and congratulations to the Contra Costa County Court for choosing such a fine leadership team. If anyone knows of any California Superior Court that has had API APJ and PJ judges at the same time, let us know - we figure this is a very proud first!







First APA Presiding Judge in Los Angeles Superior Court is Elected!

CAPAJA member **APJ Ricardo Ocampo** was elected as the Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court. He is the first Asian Pacific American judge to lead the LASC. Thank you Rick for your hard work as APJ, and we are confident in the future of the LASC under your leadership as PJ!





CAPAJA Member Elected to American Law Institute

CAPAJA Member **Judge Curtis Kin** of the LA Superior Court has been elected to the prestigious American Law Institute on the nomination of CAPAJA Member Judge Holly Fujie (Ret.) and the seconding of CAPAJA Member Judge Wesley Hsu. Curtis joins the ranks of ALI members like CAPAJA Member Judge Wendy Chang and is looking forward to participating in the activities of the ALI, which include the publication of Restatements of the Law and Model Codes.





CAPAJA Member to Speak at SABA-SC Event

On October 22, CAPAJA Member **Judge Haaris Syed** will be the Keynote Speaker at the SABA-SC Mentorship reception, to be held at Nixon Peabody's Downtown Los Angeles office. SABA-SC, which is well-known for its active mentorship program, will celebrate Haaris' appointment and encourage mentorship by and for its members.



Daily Journal profiled
3 CAPAJA Members this Month

September's first three judicial profiles in the Daily Journal featured CAPAJA members - **Judge Susan Townsend, Judge Diana Tsang, and Judge Ann H. Park.**

Much of **Judge Susan Townsend's** judicial approach is rooted in her early childhood experiences of watching her parents run a Korean restaurant in Los Angeles - "If you don't like talking to people and having conversations, this job is not for you." In her DJ profile on Sept. 1, Susan says watching her father connect with customers in the family restaurant taught her how to engage with people — a practice she brings to everyone who appears before her.

As a latchkey kid whose parents immigrated to the US in the 1960's, Susan didn't have mentors to guide her to become a lawyer. Instead, her first exposure to the law was watching Judge Joseph Wapner on the "People's Court" TV show. In the article, Susan marvels at her path from a young kid watching that show to becoming a prosecutor and then a judge.

On Sept. 4, **Judge Diana Tsang** was profiled by the DJ. Diana was born in Hong Kong and came to the United States when she was about 5 years old. The article traces her path from growing up in Chinatown, San Francisco to going to UC Irvine and UCLA School of Law. She worked for the LA Public Defender's Office after law school until she was appointed to the bench in 2023. Once on the bench and placed in a criminal assignment, Diana took the bold step to request a new assignment in family law where she applies lessons of compassion she learned while a public defender.

Judge Ann Park's path to the bench began with an ability she hadn't even recognized as a skill — her Korean language fluency, as highlighted in her Sept. 4, 2026 DJ profile. Ann came to the United States from Korea when she was in high school. A professor at UC Berkeley encouraged her to use her Korean language skills to help others, and Ann began to work at a local Korean community center which sparked her interest in the law. Throughout the article, Ann expresses gratitude for the support she has received throughout her professional journey, especially as she transitioned from criminal law to a civil assignment where she currently sits.



CAPAJA Member Featured in Article in ABA Journal

In the Fall 2026 edition of the ABA Journal, the flagship publication of the American Bar Association, CAPAJA Member Chief Judge Dolly Gee was featured in an article on the Judiciary "On Fire." The article highlighted Dolly's appearance on a panel entitled "The Bench Breaks its Silence: Sitting Judges Stand Up and Speak Out About Attacks on the Judiciary," quoting from a chilling death threat sent to her. In courageously speaking out on this critical issue, Dolly has added her voice to those seeking necessary protections for the judiciary. Thanks, Dolly from CAPAJA for carrying this message.







In Memoriam

On August 26, 2026, Justice Joyce Kennard, a trailblazer in the legal community, passed away. Over the course of her remarkable career, she rose swiftly through California's judiciary: appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court in 1986, the Los Angeles Superior Court in 1987, the Second District Court of Appeal in 1988, and ultimately the California Supreme Court in 1989, where she served with distinction for 25 years. Born in Indonesia to parents of Dutch, Indonesian, Chinese, and German heritage, she became the first person of Asian descent to serve on California's highest court. This **press release** chronicles Justice Kennard's extraordinary life and accomplishments, and her legacy of perseverance, dedication, and fairness will continue to inspire us all.



PAST EVENTS

CAPAJA Happy Hour for New Judge

On September 3, CAPAJA Member Judge Sabina Helton organized a Happy Hour to celebrate the appointment of CAPAJA Member Judge Gary Tokumori to the Los Angeles Superior Court. A good time was had by all!



From left to right: Soon-to-be Judge Irene Lee; Judge Terry Truong, Judge Sabina Helton, Soon-to-be Judge Binh Dang, Judge Hoa Hoang, Judge Gary Tokumori, Judge Gary Eto, Judge Adrian Roxas, and Judge Mike Madokoro.

Investiture Ceremony of CAPAJA Member

Former Commissioner, now **Judge Mahin Salehi** had her investiture ceremony to mark her appointment as a judge on Sept. 11. The ceremony was full of touching, and funny stories about Mahin which the audience enjoyed hearing. Presiding Judge Sergio Tapia praised Mahin for her intellect and her character and then administered the oath of office. Many CAPAJA members showed up to celebrate this special day. Congratulations Mahin!



From left to right: Judge Ramiro Cisneros, Judge Terry Truong, Judge Michelle Ahnn, Judge Amanda Park, Judge Neetu Badhan-Smith, Judge Firdaus Dordi, Judge Mahin Salehi, Judge Tony Cho, APJ Ricardo Ocampo, Judge Esther Kim, and Judge Cherisse Cleofe.

CAPAJA Members Speak at Symposium

On September 16, CAPAJA Members **USDC Judges Anne Hwang and Wesley Hsu** spoke on a panel at the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Federal Courts Symposium, along with USDC Judge André Birotte, Jr. and moderator Vicki Chou, on the subject of trial practice in the federal courts.



From left to right: Moderator Vicki Chou, US District Judge Anne Hwang, US District Judge Wesley Hsu, and US District Judge André Birotte.

CAPAJA Members Participate in Constitution Day

CAPAJA members participated in awarding local schools for excelling in civic education and cultivating meaningful student leadership. It is presented through the Power of Democracy Civic Learning Initiative, co-sponsored by Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero.

On September 18, **Justice Corey Lee** and **Judge Glenn Yabuno** were part of an event honoring Pacific High School with the Civic Learning Award of Distinction. **Justice Shama Mesiwala** participated in awarding NP3 Elementary the Award of Excellence, and this is the first year they have won the award. **APJ Ricardo Ocampo** was part of the ceremony at Norwalk High School where the school was awarded for their Government Speaker Series. For more about this program and the schools, click **here.**

Thank you Corey, Glenn, Shama, and Rick for recognizing the hard work of these students!





CAPAJA Member Gets Shout Out for Mentoring

On September 17, many CAPAJA Members came to support fellow judges at the Annual Judges Night of the Armenian Bar Association at The Grand Venue in Los Angeles. Among the honorees was LASC Judge Michael Amerian, who, during his speech, thanked CAPAJA Member **Judge Tim Saito** for mentoring him and helping him pave his path to a judicial appointment. An example of how CAPAJA Members support not only API lawyers and other CAPAJA Members, but also other excellent judicial candidates. Way to go, Tim!



From left to right: Judge Tim Saito, Judge Tiffany Tai, Judge Grace Kim, Judge Amanda Park, and Judge Christine Gonong.





FLOC Honors CAPAJA Member

On September 18, the Filipino Lawyers of Orange County held its 10th Anniversary Dinner and CAPAJA was in the house! FLOC honored CAPAJA Member **Judge Tiffany Poncy** as its Judge of the Year, and many CAPAJA Members attended to cheer her on and celebrate this important milestone for FLOC. Congratulations, Tiffany!


The Honorable
Tiffany Poncy
Judge of the Year
Orange County Superic
Jurist and educator with more than 15 years c
advocating for children, families, and p
juvenile dependency and chi


Celebrating a Decade | 2016 - 2026
FLOC Through the Years

From left to right: Chief Trial Judge U.S. Coast Guard Benes Aldana (Ret.), Judge Julian Recana, Judge Adrian Roxas, Judge Cherisse Cleofe, Judge Tiffany Poncy, Judge Cheri Pham, Judge Sheila Recio, Judge Joseph Kang, and Judge Bryan Clavecilla.

CAPAJA Member Speaks out for the Rule of Law

On the same night, **CAPAJA Member Chief Judge Dolly Gee** of the U.S.D.C. for the Central District of California spoke at the Annual Gala of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, giving a ringing endorsement for the work of all who support the rule of law and the American system of justice. Present to show their support were CAPAJA Members Judge Wendy Chang, Justice Halim Dhanidina (Ret.) and Judge Christine Gonong, Janet Hong (a Past President of WLALA) and Holly Fujie (Ret.), Dolly's evil twin. (See photo) Christine and Holly were sworn in by Dolly as members of the WLALA Board of Governors. Dolly, as always, you made us proud!