



CAPAJA February 2026  
e-Newsletter Vol 1, Issue 4

## President's Message



Happy Lunar New Year! 2026 marks the Year of the Fire Horse, a symbol of action, adventure, and enthusiasm



and a call for us to seize new opportunities. We invite you to channel this energy by making a difference through CAPAJA. Join a committee and collaborate with fellow members across the state. Mentor new judges to support their growth and development. Volunteer your talent and experience to enrich our community. If you are passionate about writing, web design, or snapping photos, we encourage you to contribute to the CAPAJA e-newsletter. By building new relationships, collaborating statewide, and sharing your unique skills, you will not only enhance your own journey, but also infuse CAPAJA with renewed energy. Contact us at [capaja@capaja.org](mailto:capaja@capaja.org) to get involved. Together, we continue our mission to support our members and uplift the community.

Hon. Jana M. Seng  
CAPAJA President 2025-2026  
Los Angeles County



## Call for Newsletter Volunteers!

Contribute to our E-Newsletter! If you are passionate about writing, have experience in web design, or enjoy snapping photos at events, we encourage you to contribute to the CAPAJA e-newsletter. Sharing important stories, photos, and information helps keep our members connected and informed. Send your submission or join the communications committee by contacting [Communications@capaja.org](mailto:Communications@capaja.org).



## Upcoming Events

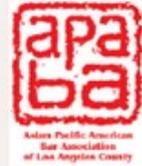


## CAPAJA Member to Moderate Zoom Panel on “Recent Trailblazers in the Law”

CAPAJA is proud to co-sponsor, with the Asian Pacific American Bar Association, a virtual panel of recent trailblazers in the law, featuring Washington State Attorney General Nick Brown, U.S. District Judge Dena Coggins of the Eastern District of California, Presiding Judge Sergio Tapia II of

the Los Angeles Superior Court and U.S. Congressman Derek Tan of California's 45th District. The panel will be on Feb. 4, 2026 from 6-7 pm. Each of the participants will discuss their paths to leadership, and this will be an opportunity to celebrate their experiences and achievements and explore how leadership can be encouraged and nurtured in young lawyers. The moderator of the panel will be CAPAJA Past President Judge Holly Fujie of the LASC. This program is free, and you can RSVP at [bit.ly/apabatrailblazers2026](https://bit.ly/apabatrailblazers2026).

# Recent Trailblazers in the Law



A ZOOM PANEL CELEBRATING THE EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF  
INSPIRING "FIRSTS" IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION.

Wednesday, February 4, 2026  
VIRTUAL PANEL: 6:00 - 7:00PM PT  
(FREE MCLE PROVIDED)

**RSVP: [bit.ly/apabatrailblazers2026](https://bit.ly/apabatrailblazers2026)**



Attorney General Nick Brown  
WASHINGTON STATE

Judge Dena Coggins  
U.S. DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA



Presiding Judge Sergio C. Tapia II  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

U.S. Representative Derek Tran  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Moderated By:  
Judge Holly Fujie (Ret.)  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT



ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN WOMEN LAWYERS ALLIANCE | ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN LAWYERS OF THE  
INLAND EMPIRE | CALIFORNIA ASIAN-PACIFIC AMERICAN JUDGES ASSOCIATION |  
FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES | MULTICULTURAL BAR ALLIANCE |  
PHILIPPINE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION | SAN GABRIEL VALLEY BAR ASSOCIATION |  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

THIS EVENT IS CERTIFIED FOR 1.0 ELIMINATION OF BIAS MCLE CREDIT. APABA IS A CALIFORNIA STATE BAR APPROVED MCLE PROVIDER.



## New CAPAJA Judicial Officers



### Los Angeles Judges Elect New API Commissioner

The Judges of the Los Angeles Superior Court elected former Deputy Public Defender Haaris Syed as a Commissioner this month. CAPAJA's leadership sent a message to him, welcoming him as a new member, and he has expressed his enthusiasm for becoming involved in our activities. Welcome to the bench, Haaris (although Thomas Cotugno, the Newsletter Editor's son, was sad to lose you as his Supervisor at the PD's office in Torrance!)



### Orange County Superior Court Gains a New API Commissioner

Last month, Harris Siddiq was sworn in as a Commissioner for the Orange County Superior Court. Prior to his election, he was a Deputy District Attorney in Orange County. He was welcomed to CAPAJA, and he wrote that he "look[s] forward to serving with honor and integrity and look[s] forward to working with you all." We are glad to have you as a CAPAJA member, Harris!



## Past Events



### CAPAJA Member Celebrated at Her Investiture

On Dec. 11, 2025, CAPAJA members, friends, family, and colleagues gathered to celebrate at the Investiture Ceremony of Judge Anne Hwang of the US District Court. The program was officiated by Judge Dolly Gee who also administered the oath of office. Attendees had a wonderful time hearing stories about Anne's diligence, legal skills, and humor. Afterwards, we were able to enjoy delicious Korean food inside the beautiful District Courthouse. We are so proud of you Anne!





*From left to right: Judge Alexander Giza, Judge Firdaus Dordi, Judge Tony Cho, Judge Lee Tsao, Judge Michelle Ahnn, Judge Holly Fujie, Judge Anne Hwang, Judge Jana Seng, Judge Esther Kim, Judge Wendy Chang, Justice Audra Mori, Justice Michelle Kim, and Judge Bryant Yang.*



## **CAPAJA Past President Retirement Party**

Dozens of CAPAJA Members attended a retirement party held for CAPAJA Past President Holly Fujie of the Los Angeles Superior Court on January 6 at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Los Angeles. The party, which was put on with great style by CAPAJA Members Judge Mike Madokoro and Judge Wendy Chang, featured speeches by CAPAJA Members LASC Assistant Presiding Judge Ric Ocampo, Past CAPAJA President Judge Terry Truong and current CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng. Jana presented Holly with a beautifully bound book from CAPAJA, which consisted of many photos and letters from CAPAJA Members, including a mysteriously addressed letter to “My Evil Twin, Holly” from “Your Evil Twin, Dolly” aka USDC CD CA Chief Judge Dolly Gee! As Newsletter Editor, I exercise my editorial prerogative to express in this issue my incredible gratitude to Mike, Wendy, Ric, Terry, Jana and the many CAPAJA Members who came out to celebrate my retirement. Thank you all, and I promise I will see you at even more CAPAJA events in the future!





*LASC APJ Ricardo Ocampo thanked Judge Holly Fujie for her mentorship and friendship during her years on the bench.*



*Judge Terry Truong had the opportunity to tell the attendees how much work Judge Holly Fujie has done for CAPAJA.*





*CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng presented Judge Holly Fujie with gifts from CAPAJA.  
(On the left, Judge Rob Villeza and Judge Terry Truong).*



*Judge Mike Madokoro introduced the guest of honor.*





*Judge Holly Fujie, enjoying her moment to thank those who she worked with during her years on the bench.*

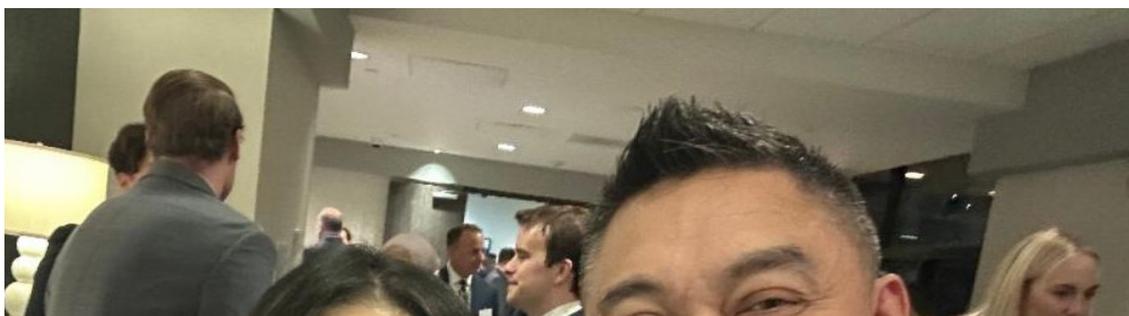


*We were able to gather most of the CAPAJA members in attendance for a group picture with the guest of honor.*



## **Orange County Bar Celebrates Judicial Officers**

On January 22, the Orange County Bar Association held its annual Judges Night and Annual Meeting at the Irvine Marriott. Many CAPAJA Members attended – too many to count! Judge Bryan Clavecilla was recently selected as one of CAPAJA's Photo Editors, and he is off to a great start with these pictures. Thanks Bryan for contributing to the newsletter!





*Justice Joanne Motioko and Judge Bryan Clavecilla*



*From left to right: Judge Joseph Kang, Judge Sheila Recio, and Judge Bryan Clavecilla.*





*From left to right: Judge Kay Watson, Judge Elia Naqui, Judge Mehtab Sandhu, Judge Ami Sagel, and Judge Bryan Clavecilla.*



## **Met News Honors CAPAJA Member as Person of the Year**

As we mentioned in last month's newsletter, the Met News chose CAPAJA Member Judge Linda Liu Sun of the Los Angeles Superior Court as Person of the Year. Several CAPAJA members were in attendance at the celebration on January 23rd and enjoyed the opportunity to show their support for Linda and her well-deserved award. Congratulations, Linda!



*From left to right: Judge Terry Truong, Judge Sumako McCallum,  
Awardee Judge Linda Sun, Judge Akemi Arakaki, and Judge Jana Seng*



## **CAPAJA Member Honored by Southeast (LA) District Bar Association**

On January 31, CAPAJA Member Judge Tiffany Tai of the Los Angeles Superior Court was named the Southeast District Bar Association 2026 Judicial Officer of the Year at its annual Officers and Trustees Awards Gala, held at the Sheraton Cerritos Hotel in Cerritos. The Host for the Gala was also a CAPAJA Member, Judge Lee Tsao of the LASC. Clearly, the SEDBA knows how to honor and feature the best and the brightest from the Court's judicial officers – Congratulations, Tiffany! Look for photos in our newsletter next month.



## **CAPAJA Members in the News**



## **CAPAJA Newsletter Gains New Photo Editors**

CAPAJA is delighted to announce that two of its members have volunteered to serve as Photo Editors for the Newsletter, which means they will be taking pictures of CAPAJA members at different events for publication in our newsletter. Judge Johnny Gogo of Santa Clara County Superior Court will be serving as Northern California Photo Editor and Judge Bryan Clavecilla of Orange County Superior Court will act as Southern California Photo Editor, joining Judge Christine Gonong who is the Los Angeles area Photo Editor. Thanks to Christine, Bryan and Johnny, we will be featuring even more of the many activities in which CAPAJA Members participate and lead. But you don't have to be a Photo Editor to submit photos! If you have photographs of CAPAJA Members at events, feel free to send them to [communications@capaja.org](mailto:communications@capaja.org) so that we can include them in our newsletter.





**Alexander P. Sario**

*Los Angeles County Superior Court*

**Career Highlights:** *Appointed Los Angeles County Superior Court judge by Gov. Gavin Newsom, Nov. 21, 2024; deputy alternate public defender, Los Angeles County, 2008-24; deputy public defender, Riverside County, 2007-08; associate, law clerk, Palmer Lombardi & Donohue LLP (now closed), 2006-07*

Source: [dailyjournal.com/judicial\\_profile/10911](https://dailyjournal.com/judicial_profile/10911)

## CAPAJA Member Praised in DJ Profile

On Jan. 5, 2026, the Daily Journal issued a profile of LA Superior Court Judge Alex Sario which was entitled “Judge Alexander Sario learned to read a room as a DJ.” It discusses how Alex draws upon his experiences as a DJ to recognize that he sets the tone of his courtroom. “What I do affects the atmosphere,” he stated.

Alex is praised by attorneys for his control of the courtroom and his demeanor. Wonderful profile Alex, and thanks for still using your DJ skills for CAPAJA events!



## The Voice Publicizes Webinar for Program Launched by CAPAJA Members

In the January 16, 2026 edition of the California Judges Association’s “The Voice,” CJA publicized a January 27 “Train the Trainers” workshop where judges and attorneys could learn how to volunteer and lead workshops on effective advocacy and leadership for law students. This workshop is part of a program launched and supported by CAPAJA Members Judge Rohanee Zapanta of the San Diego Superior Court and CJA Past President B. Tam Nomoto Schumann (Orange County Superior Court, Ret.). What a great way to help the profession, Tam and Rohanee!



## CAPAJA Member Chosen to be on the Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions

The California Supreme Court has appointed CAPAJA Member Judge Fred Chung (Santa Clara County) to serve on the Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinion. As a member of this Committee, Judge Chung, along with the other members, provides guidance on judicial misconduct. Notably, he is filling the

vacancy left by CAPAJA Past President Erica Yew. Although you have big shoes to fill, we know you are up for the challenge, Fred!



**Curtis A. Kin**

*Los Angeles County Superior Court*

**Career Highlights:** Appointed Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge by Gov. Jerry Brown, July 15, 2013; adjunct professor, Pepperdine Caruso Law, 2003; assistant U.S. attorney, 2000-13; law clerk, 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Sonia Sotomayor (currently Supreme Court Justice,) 1999-2000; associate, Cravath Swaine & Moore LLP, 1997-99; law clerk, U.S. District Judge Jed S. Rakoff, 1996-97

Source: [dailyjournal.com/judicial\\_profile/10918](https://dailyjournal.com/judicial_profile/10918)

## CAPAJA Member's Love of the Law Shows in His DJ Profile

On Jan. 26, 2026, Judge Curtis Kin was profiled in the Daily Journal, and the article focuses on how Curtis has enjoyed every judicial assignment he has had - ranging from criminal to civil and now to writs and receivers. His love of the law extends beyond the bench. He has taught trial advocacy for more than two decades at Pepperdine Caruso Law and Loyola Law school and he co-writes a quarterly column for CJA and is helping update California Objections. We are inspired by your work on and off the bench Curtis!



**Our best wishes to you all for a very Happy, Healthy and Productive Lunar New Year!**

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President

Nathan Vu, CAPAJA President-Elect



## CAPAJA Student Scholarship



CAPAJA will again award \$2500 scholarships to deserving law students working as judicial interns.

Your generous donations make these scholarships possible. If you are a judge, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to our Scholarship Fund through our website.

[Click to Donate](#)

**Thank you for your support!**

*If you have news or know 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](mailto:communications@capaja.org) and we will feature it in the next newsletter.*

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