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August 2025 CAPAJA Newsletter

Dear CAPAJA Member:

CAPAJA hopes all our Members are continuing to enjoy a wonderful summer! Here is the CAPAJA news for July of 2025.

New CAPAJA Member in San Mateo County Superior Court

CAPAJA sends belated congratulations to new Member Michael Mau, who was elected as a Commissioner of the San Mateo Superior Court in September of 2022. Before joining the bench, besides owning his own law firm in the Bay Area, Michael was extremely active in the community, serving as a Commissioner on the City of Pacifica – Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission and on the San Mateo County Commission on Aging, and as a member of the City of Pacifica – Rent Advisory Task Force. Welcome to CAPAJA, Michael!



CAPAJA Members Profiled in DJ

On July 2, CAPAJA Member LASC Judge Lowrie Mendoza was profiled in the Daily Journal. The article highlighted her experience as a child in the Philippines, including the horrific incident when her father was shot in front of the family home as a result of his work as a lawyer for the National Bureau of Investigation who refused to pay protection money to a corrupt police officer. As the title states: "Judge Lowrie Mendoza's path was forged by her father's fight for justice." A very impressive and inspiring profile, Lowrie!

On July 8, the Daily Journal profiled CAPAJA Member Commissioner Michelle Lim of the Los Angeles Superior Court. In an article titled: "Commissioner Michelle Lim balances firmness with empathy in her unlawful detainer court," lawyers praised Michelle's patience, and the profile also noted her "particularly deft touch with self-represented litigants." High praise, Michelle!

CAPAJA Member Judge Kinna Patel Crocker of the Sonoma County Superior Court was profiled in the July 17 DJ. The article is titled "Judge Kinna Patel Crocker controls courtroom with grace, mercy, humility" and discusses Kinna's naturalization ceremony in a small courthouse in Greenville, Tennessee after her parents brought her to this country from India at around 2 years old. A lawyer who has appeared in her family law courtroom described her as "patient, kind and knowledgeable." A fine profile, Kinna!

In the July 18 DJ, CAPAJA Member Judge Jon Takasugi of the Los Angeles Superior Court is quoted as saying that his civil assignment was "invigorating" and that the "attorneys are nicer to the judges in civil" – despite the article's reporting on a decidedly uncivil exchange during a Debtor's Exam in his courtroom! The article also described Jon's career before going on the bench as a reporter and photographer for the Rafu Shimpo, as well as his role as a girls' softball coach and umpire and his leadership of the renowned Pro Bono Bar Review program. Sounds like a well-rounded life, Jon!

On Monday, July 21, CAPAJA Member Judge Stephanie C. Santoro of the Los Angeles Superior Court was profiled in a Daily Journal article entitled “Judge Stephanie Santoro makes hard calls quickly in probate court.” The article reports on how Stephanie made a swift transition to probate court, although she had never had any exposure to wills or trusts since graduating from law school in 2008. Stephanie expressed a deep understanding of the nature of probate court disputes, saying “These aren’t just legal disputes. These are people who’ve shared decades of family history. Some are fighting over relatively little money, but it’s not about the money – it’s about hurt, betrayal, unresolved tensions. These are not one-time wrongs.” Well said, Stephanie!

What Would “The Bench” Do Without CAPAJA Members?

OK, that was facetious, but the Summer issue of The Bench was chock full of articles either written by or regarding CAPAJA Members! There was, of course, LASC Judges Curtis Kin and Elaine Lu’s regular column on Civil Law, this time entitled “Ex Ante Contractual Limitations on Discovery.” Then there was a great interview of LASC Judge Rupa Goswami for the regular feature, “In Chambers,” and a New Judge Profile of LASC Judge Phu Nguyen. CAPAJA Members Judge Melissa D’Morias of Kings County and Judge Pahoua Lor of the Fresno Superior Court were featured in this month’s article on “The Call.”

LASC Judge Wendy Chang was the “Counterpoint” in the “Point/Counterpoint” article on “Written versus Verbal Meet-and-Confers: Is a Call Really Necessary?” CAPAJA Members Justice Michelle Kim of the 2d DCA and Justice Danny Chon of the 1st DCA gave “Tips & Tricks for New Judges”, and Judge Sophia Choi of the Riverside Superior Court wrote on civility in an article entitled “With All Due Respect.”

And finally, CAPAJA Members, including Past CJA President and Past CAPAJA President Erica Yew appeared in the photos accompanying an article on the 2025 CJA Legislative Day, showing that CAPAJA is involved in legislative activities on behalf of judges. Hey! Who needs a CAPAJA Newsletter when we have The Bench!

PAST EVENTS

CAPAJA Members Celebrate at OCAABA.

On July 11, 2025, the Orange County Asian American Bar Association held its Gala which was well attended by our members, pictured below. There were so many people that it was difficult to gather all the CAPAJA members to take a photo. Some notable attendees who are not pictured were Justice Motoike and Judge Nathan Vu.



From left to right: Comm. Lydia Kim, Comm. Tiffany Poncy, Judge Huy Nguyen, Judge June An, and Judge Bryan Clavecilla.

CAPAJA Member Honored by APABA

Judge Holly Fujie was awarded the Public Service Award by APABA on July 17, 2025. Holly gave a moving and funny speech reflecting on her professional journey and the profound effect that mentors have had in her life. As a testament to her own mentorship powers, the room was full of law students, attorneys, and judges who have been encouraged and mentored by Holly. Congratulations Holly on a well-deserved award!



From left to right seated: Judge Holly Fujie, Judge Cristina Legaspi, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Ruth Kwan, and Judge Jana Seng.

From left to right standing: Chief District Judge Dolly Gee, Judge Helen Yang, Judge Christine Gonong, Judge Gia Kim, Judge Michelle Ahnn, Judge Grace Kim, Commissioner Amanda Park, Judge Linda Sun, Judge Mike Madokoro, and Judge Wendy Chang.

Our Best Wishes to you all for a very Happy, Healthy and Productive August!

Jayne Chong-Soon Lee, CAPAJA President

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President-Elect for 2024-2025

Nathan Vu, CAPAJA President-Elect for 2025-2026

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 of an event that may be of interest to CAPAJA members, please send an email to Newsletter Editor Holly Fujie at HFujie@LACourt.org, and we will feature it in the next newsletter.