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RIVERSIDE LAWYER
MAGAZINE

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PRESIDENT'S Message

by Megan G. Demshki

Spring Forward with the RCBA

Reading Day

The RCBA kicked off March with Reading Day at Harada Elementary School on March 2, 2026. Judges, attorneys and legal staff joined us for Read Across America Day where we visited every classroom at Harada Elementary School to read to them and answer the students' questions about the practice of law. Additionally, the RCB Foundation donated funds to the library and RCBA members brought books to help grow the library's collection.

Thank you to Jacqueline Carey-Wilson, Charlene Nelson and the entire Reading Day Committee for making this event a reality.

RCB Foundation and Project Graduate Fundraiser

On March 4, 2026, the RCB Foundation and Project Graduate held a fundraiser at the Riverside Community Players. After a social hour enjoying the beautiful spring weather outdoors, the attendees were treated to the Riverside Community Players' rendition of *Alice in Wonderland.*

Thank you to the sponsors whose contributions will benefit both the RCB Foundation and Project Graduate:

Alice	Aitken Aitken Cohn Hanson & Mouri Malcolm Cisneros Law Offices of Catherine A. Schwartz
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Queen of Hearts	Erica Alfaro Canyon Children's Legal Services Hon. Belinda Handy Sharon P. Ramirez

In addition, numerous individuals and organizations donated silent auction items to benefit the organizations.

Thank you to Alexandra Fong, Abe Feuerstein, and the Deegan Inn of Court for coordinating this wonderful event.

Mediation Month

The RCBA teamed up with Dispute Resolution Service to bring our membership the March General Membership Meeting on Friday, March 13, 2026. David Dowling, Managing Director at Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine's Caruso School of Law, discussed "Negotiation Strategies for Lawyers in Mediation." Dr. Dowling's presentation was fantastic and Dispute Resolution Service kindly sponsored lunch for all attendees.

Thank you to Dispute Resolution Service for partnering with us on this great program. Please consider using Dispute Resolution Service for your next mediation. The panel of mediators is diverse and experienced.

Join us!

On April 17, 2026, please join us for the April General Membership Meeting at noon at the Gabbert Gallery. The speaker will be Presiding Judge Jacqueline Jackson who will be discussing the State of the Court. This program is always a crowd favorite, and we are looking forward to seeing many members in attendance.

In addition, on April 24, 2026, from 12:00 to 3:45 pm, Dispute Resolution Service will be offering a Mediation Continuing Education Training that is open to all RCBA Members at the Gabbert Gallery. Professor Stephanie Blondell will be discussing "The Psychology of the Deal: An Exploration for Mediators." This program is free of charge for all RCBA members and includes lunch. RSVP by April 20 to 951-682-2132 or drs@riversidecountybar.com.

Get Involved with the RCBA

I would love to hear from you! If you have any feedback or see an opportunity to grow the RCBA programming, please do not hesitate to reach out. I'm also happy to introduce you to new colleagues at any of our events. My email is megan@aitkenlaw.com and my phone number is (951) 534-4006.

Megan G. Demshki is the president of the RCBA and a partner at Aitken Aitken Cohn.

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BARRISTERS
President's Message

by Sharon P. Ramirez

"It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen."
— John Wooden

As we move into the second quarter of 2026, this reminder from Coach Wooden feels especially fitting for the work Barristers continues to do within the Riverside legal community. Whether it's mentoring college and law students, hosting networking and educational events for our young attorneys, or simply creating opportunities to connect outside of the office and courtroom, these moments help strengthen the relationships that support our profession. It's this spirit of collaboration and community that makes practicing law in Riverside and the Inland Empire so special. Over the past months, Barristers members have come together for several events, from engaging with future attorneys to building camaraderie among colleagues, each contributing to the continued growth of our vibrant legal community.

Past Events Recap

UCR Womxn in the Law Networking Dinner
March 6, 2026

On a relaxing Friday night, UCR Womxn in the Law (WITL) held their Networking Dinner on the UCR campus. WITL created a space where legal professionals from various practices were invited to share their experiences, advice, and insight to UCR students interested in the legal profession. Barrister board members, Elia and Sharon, served as panelists and brought motivation, wisdom, and encouragement to the next generation of advocates! Thank you to WITL for the invitation and for putting together an excellent event.

Disneyland with the Barristers
March 7, 2026

The Barristers crew had a blast at the happiest place on earth! Our annual Disneyland Day has quickly become a Barristers tradition, and this year was no exception. The day began with a delicious brunch at Great Maple inside the Pixar Place Hotel before we headed into the park to enjoy some of Disneyland's most iconic

Elia Vazquez and Sharon Ramirez with UCR Womxn in Law student members

Leighton Silva, Leo Herrera, Nolan Kistler

Ryan Gallant, Mackenzi Christenson, Erika Perez, Amanda Perez, Sharon Ramirez, Jackie Navas, Faran Imani, Rocio Carrasco, Chris Samarripas, and Joel Cervantes.

Sara Truit, Anahi Carrasco, Rocio Carrasco, Faran Imani, Sharon Ramirez, Erika Perez, Mackenzi Christenson

attractions together, including Haunted Mansion and Rise of the Resistance. Throughout the day, members and their family and friends connected over great rides, great food, and plenty of laughs. Thank you to everyone who joined us for such a memorable day.

Barristers Happy Hour – March 13, 2026

Our March Happy Hour took place at El Patrón in downtown Riverside. A special thank you to Law Offices of Harlan B. Kistler for generously sponsoring the appetizers. It was great to see both familiar faces and new Barrister members. These monthly gatherings are a great opportunity to connect and create a welcoming space for young lawyers in our community. We hope to see even more of you at our next Happy Hour!

ULV CLPS Joint Panel – March 25, 2026

Local bar associations, including RCBA Barristers, HBAIE, RTFBA, and APALIE, came onto the University of La Verne College of Law and Public Service campus for the 4th annual joint panel with ULV student organizations. Attorney members from the bar associations provided valuable insight and practical advice to law students on navigating law school, building meaningful professional relationships, and preparing for their legal careers. The discussion also highlighted the importance of mentorship, networking, and finding ways to get involved in the legal community early. Thank you to board members Nolan, Henry, and Elia who participated on behalf of Barristers as panelists and took the time to share their experiences and guidance with the next generation of attorneys.

Upcoming Events. You're Invited!

- **Group Golf Lessons** *[Sold Out]* **–** April-May 2026, Van Buren Golf Center, Riverside
- **Joint Hike with HBAIE –** Saturday, April 11, 2026, meet at the flagpole at 8:15am, brunch afterwards at Tio's Tacos in Downtown Riverside
- **Barristers Happy Hour –** Friday, April 17, 2026, 5:30pm at Back to the Grind – appetizers sponsored by Integrated Medical Center
- **7th Annual Judicial Reception –** Thursday, May 14, 2026, 5-7:30pm – Tickets on sale now! Purchase here: https://rcbabarristersjudicialreception2026.eventbrite.com
- **Barristers Happy Hour and New Attorney Academy Graduation Celebration –** Friday, May 15, 2026, starting at 2:30pm, location to be announced, appetizers sponsored by Maasumi Headache & Spine Care

We are always happy to hear suggestions and ideas for events you are interested in seeing from Barristers. Please feel free to reach out! My contact information is below.

Barristers Board Spotlight: Next up is Henry!

Henry Andriano, 2025-2026 Secretary

Henry Andriano is an associate in the municipal and litigation practice groups at Best Best & Krieger LLP's Riverside office, where he specializes in eminent domain and inverse condemnation claims. This is Henry's second year serving on the Barristers Board. He also volunteers pro bono legal services at Inland Empire Latino Lawyers Association (IELLA) in Riverside. Henry joined the Barristers Board to help new attorneys recognize that their membership in the Inland Empire legal community is valued and can extend far beyond their own firm/office or practice area. In his spare time, Henry enjoys roasting green coffee beans in his small-batch roaster and then sampling the tasty results.

Stay up to date on everything Barristers!

For upcoming events and updates:

Website: https://www.rcbabarristers.com/
check out our revamped website!

Facebook: RCBA Barristers

Instagram: @rcbabarristers

If you're interested in learning more about Barristers or you would like to attend one of our events, I am more than happy to connect with you and introduce you to our amazing members. Feel free to email me at sramirez@ramirezlaw.com or text or call at (909) 702-0058.

Sharon P. Ramirez is an attorney with Kenny Ramirez Law Firm located in San Bernardino, where she practices catastrophic personal injury. Sharon can be reached at sramirez@ramirezlaw.com.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Experienced Family Law and Criminal Law Attorneys are needed to volunteer their services as arbitrators on the RCBA Fee Arbitration Program.

If you are a member of the RCBA and can help, or for more info, please contact Lisa Yang at (951) 682-1015 or lisa@riversidecountybar.com.

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After the Sentence Ends: The Lawyer's Role Beyond the Courtroom

by Jason Vera

When I was sentenced to life in prison, the courtroom was the center of my world. Every word spoken by the attorneys, every motion filed, every decision made felt final. In those moments, the law was everything.

What I did not understand then, and what many people outside the system still don't, is that the sentence is only the beginning of another, quieter chapter of punishment. For most the formal sentence eventually ends. However, the informal sentence often follows someone for life.

Today, I work as a Reentry Case Coordinator and mentor for individuals returning home from incarceration. Every day I sit across from men and women who have completed their time and are determined to rebuild their lives. They are eager to work. They want to reconnect with their families. Many want to go to school. But what they face after release is often a maze of collateral consequences that no judge announced in open court.

Housing applications that ask about convictions. Employers who say they are second chance friendly but never call back. Professional licenses that are difficult to obtain. Social stigma that harms in subtle but powerful ways.

For many, the real battle begins after the sentence ends.

I write this not as a critique of the legal profession, but as someone who has lived on both sides of the system and now works alongside it. I have seen firsthand the difference a lawyer's perspective can make, not only in court, but in how justice plays out beyond it.

Public defenders, prosecutors, and private attorneys all operate within defined roles. You advocate, negotiate, litigate, and resolve cases within the framework of the law. But you also shape something less tangible: how your clients see themselves and how the system sees them.

I still remember attorneys who treated me as more than a case number. Yes, they held me accountable, but they also spoke to me with dignity. That dignity mattered more than I realized at the time. When someone inside the system communicates that you are capable of change, it plants a seed. It says, "Your worst decision is not who you are."

That message reverberates long after the courtroom.

Now, in my work with returning citizens, I often encounter individuals who feel defined by their past. Some internalize the narrative that they are permanent risks, permanently flawed. When legal professionals take the time to get to know their clients, to explain consequences clearly, or even to connect them to community-based resources, it changes that narrative. It signals that accountability and hope can coexist.

The truth is that reentry is not solely a social service issue. It is a public safety issue. When individuals leave custody with stable housing, employment pathways, and support networks, communities are safer. Recidivism decreases not because someone is given a break, but because they are given a chance to succeed.

Lawyers are uniquely positioned to influence that trajectory.

Sometimes that influence is direct: advocating for alternative sentencing, diversion programs, or treatment-based approaches where appropriate. Sometimes it is indirect: building relationships with local reentry organizations, understanding the collateral consequences clients will face, or encouraging participation in rehabilitative programming while a client is still in custody.

Even something as simple as language matters. Referring to someone as a "returning citizen" instead of an "ex-felon" may seem minor, but language shapes identity. Identity shapes behavior. Behavior shapes outcomes.

Giving back, in the context of criminal justice, is not about charity. It is about recognizing that the work done inside the courtroom resonates far beyond it. The legal system does not end at sentencing; it continues in neighborhoods, workplaces, and families.

As someone who served 26 years and now works to support others coming home, I can say this with certainty: transformation is possible. I have seen individuals earn degrees, become business owners, mentor youth, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. I have also seen how easily that progress can be derailed by barriers that feel insurmountable.

The legal community has the power to reduce those barriers, not by abandoning its responsibility to uphold the law, but by broadening its view of justice to include what happens after the case closes.

Justice is not only about punishment. It is also about restoration. It is about whether a person who has paid their debt is allowed a genuine opportunity to rebuild.

For those practicing law in Riverside County and beyond, I offer this perspective with respect and gratitude. All of you entered this profession because you believe in fairness, accountability, and the rule of law. My hope is that we continue expanding that vision to include second chances offering true support.

The sentence may end in the courtroom. But the story of justice continues in the community. And we all have a role in how that story unfolds.

Jason Vera is a reentry case coordinator, credible messenger, peer support specialist, community health worker, gang expert and justice reform advocate who transformed 26 years in prison into a life dedicated to community service and systems change. He partners with legal professionals, non- profits and community-based organizations to strengthen reentry pathways, bridge lived experience with policy, and build safer, more equitable communities.

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Access to Justice After the Verdict

by Michael Semanchik

When Horace Roberts was convicted of murder in Riverside County, the system considered his case finished. The jury had spoken. The judgment was entered. Finality had attached.

But justice had not.

Years later, DNA testing identified the actual perpetrators. Horace was exonerated. And more recently, those responsible for the crime were convicted and sentenced.

His case is often described as a story about wrongful conviction. It is that. But it is also a story about access to justice.

We tend to think of access to justice as a civil issue: eviction defense, family law representation, and fee waivers. In criminal law, we assume the constitutional right to counsel solves the problem. Yet once a conviction becomes final, access to justice narrows dramatically. For many people, it disappears altogether.

The Access Gap No One Sees

Post-conviction litigation is structurally different from trial work. There is no guaranteed right to appointed counsel for most habeas petitions. Procedural bars are complex and unforgiving. Evidence grows stale or disappears. Witnesses move or die. Forensic science evolves. Records are difficult to obtain. Funding for investigation and expert review is scarce.

And the people navigating this terrain are almost always indigent.

The reality is simple: without outside help, most wrongful convictions will never be meaningfully reviewed.

In Horace's case, the turning point came when resources were devoted to reinvestigating the facts and pursuing DNA testing. That kind of work is time-consuming and expensive. It requires lawyers, investigators, experts, and cooperation from institutions. It requires persistence over years.

Access to justice in this context does not mean access to a courtroom. It means access to reinvestigation.

Collaboration, Not Combat

One of the encouraging developments in recent years has been the rise of Conviction Integrity Units. The Riverside County District Attorney's Conviction Review Committee reflects an understanding that accuracy is a shared professional obligation. Defense attorneys, prosecutors, and nonprofit innocence organizations may approach cases from different perspectives, but the common goal is the same: getting it right.

Post-conviction work functions best when it is collaborative rather than reflexively adversarial. When information is shared. When testing is stipulated to. When both sides are willing to reexamine old assumptions in light of new science or new evidence.

Access to justice improves when institutions work together.

Can Technology Close the Gap?

Even with collaboration, the volume of requests is considerable. Each submission is reviewed. Claims that lack legal or factual merit are addressed promptly. Cases presenting credible issues are assigned for full investigation. The constraint is not willingness but capacity. Comprehensive reinvestigation requires time, staffing, and expert support, and limited resources affect how quickly that work can proceed.

This is where emerging technology, including artificial intelligence, may begin to make a meaningful dent in the access-to-justice gap.

AI cannot replace lawyers. It cannot make credibility determinations or strategic decisions. But it can help screen large volumes of case materials. It can extract structured data from transcripts. It can flag potential forensic issues. It can identify patterns across cases that might otherwise go unnoticed. It can reduce the time between intake and meaningful review.

For organizations like The Innocence Center, technology is not about novelty. It is about scale. If we can responsibly leverage AI tools to review more cases, faster and more accurately, we expand access to justice to people who would otherwise never receive it.

Expanding responsible access to legal AI tools within correctional settings could also improve access to justice. Many incarcerated individuals are navigating complex procedural rules without training. Tools that help organize records, clarify legal standards, and structure claims would not replace counsel, but they could improve the quality of filings and advocacy. In turn, judges, clerks, and innocence organizations would spend less time deciphering submissions and more time evaluating the merits. Thoughtful access to technology could strengthen both individual advocacy and institutional efficiency.

Used carefully and ethically, technology can function as a force multiplier.

What Can the Bar Do?

Access to justice in the post-conviction space will not improve by accident. It requires participation from the legal community.

There are several ways Riverside attorneys can engage:

- **Pro bono representation or limited-scope assistance.** Even discrete research projects or record collection efforts make a difference.
- **Expertise sharing.** Lawyers with experience in forensic science, appellate practice, or emerging evidentiary standards can provide critical insight.
- **Institutional openness.** Prosecutors and defense attorneys alike can support policies that facilitate testing, file access, and information exchange.

- **Financial support.** Nonprofit innocence work is resource intensive. Donations and sponsorships directly fund investigation, DNA testing, and expert review.

Wrongful convictions are not abstractions. They represent years of lost liberty, unaddressed trauma for victims, and public safety consequences when the true perpetrator remains unidentified.

Access to justice after a verdict is not about undermining finality. It is about reinforcing confidence in the system. Every corrected error strengthens public trust. Every collaborative review affirms that accuracy matters more than ego.

Horace Roberts' case reminds us that justice is not a static event. It is an ongoing obligation.

For those of us who practice law in Riverside County, access to justice does not end when the jury is discharged. In many ways, that is when it begins.

Michael Semanchik is the executive director of The Innocence Center, a nonprofit law firm dedicated to freeing the innocent, supporting reentry, and educating the public about wrongful convictions. He has helped secure the release of a dozen wrongfully convicted individuals from prison. Michael also hosts For the Innocent, a podcast exploring wrongful convictions and the people working to prevent them.

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Seeking Justice
Riverside County District Attorney's Office

by Jared Haringsma

In every criminal case, the pursuit of justice is both a guiding principle and a solemn responsibility. For the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, that responsibility is captured in a simple but profound mission: *to vigorously enforce the law, pursue the truth, and safeguard the rights of all to ensure that justice is done on behalf of our community.*

This mission reflects the dual obligation of a prosecutor—to advocate for accountability, while ensuring fairness, integrity, and respect for the rights of every individual involved in the criminal justice system.

As the representative of the People of the State of California in all criminal matters arising in Riverside County, the District Attorney's Office occupies a unique role. Unlike other advocates in the system, prosecutors do not represent a single individual or entity. Instead, they represent the interests of justice itself. This responsibility requires measured judgment, ethical discipline, and an unwavering commitment to doing the right thing—for the right reasons—every time.

Protecting Victims and the Community

At its core, the work of the District Attorney's Office is about protecting victims and safeguarding the community. This mission takes many forms. In cases involving serious and violent felonies, it means holding offenders accountable and seeking appropriate sentences that protect the public and reflect the gravity of the harm caused. In those cases, incarceration serves not only as punishment but also as a necessary safeguard—removing dangerous individuals from the community and preventing further victimization.

A clear example of this commitment can be seen in the office's response to the *fentanyl crisis*. Riverside County has been at the forefront of holding drug dealers accountable when their actions result in death. In appropriate cases, the District Attorney's Office has prosecuted fentanyl dealers for murder when they knowingly provide a lethal substance that causes a victim's death. Notably, Riverside County was the first in the state, and possibly the nation, to secure a murder conviction at trial against a fentanyl dealer under these circumstances. These cases send a clear message: those who profit from distributing this deadly drug will be held fully accountable for the devastating consequences of their actions.

At the same time, justice is not a one-size-fits-all concept. Not every case requires the same response, and not every individual benefits from the same outcome. Recognizing this, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office has developed and supported a range of collaborative courts, designed to address the underlying causes of criminal behavior and reduce recidivism.

Collaborative Courts and Smart Justice

Riverside County's collaborative courts—including **Veterans Court, Mental Health Court, Drug Court,** and **Homeless Court**—reflect a more nuanced approach to justice. These programs focus on individuals whose criminal conduct is often linked to substance abuse, mental health challenges, or life instability.

Rather than relying solely on traditional prosecution, these courts bring together judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, and service providers to create individualized plans for rehabilitation. Participants are held accountable, but are also given access to treatment, housing resources, counseling, and other support systems designed to promote long-term stability.

The goal is straightforward: reduce future crime by addressing its root causes. When successful, these programs not only change the trajectory of an individual's life, but also enhance public safety by decreasing the likelihood of future victimization. In this way, diversion and treatment are not alternatives to accountability—they are tools of justice, applied where they are most effective.

Ensuring Integrity Through Conviction Review

A commitment to justice also requires a willingness to reexamine past convictions when credible claims of innocence exist. The Riverside County District Attorney's Office has established a **Conviction Review Committee** (CRC) to evaluate such claims with care, independence, and rigor.

The CRC focuses exclusively on claims of *actual* innocence. Applications must meet clearly defined criteria, including that the conviction occurred in Riverside County, that the applicant is currently in custody, and—most importantly—that the claim is supported by credible, verifiable evidence of innocence. Claims based solely on legal error or ineffective assistance of counsel do not qualify.

This distinction is intentional. The CRC is not a substitute for the appellate process; rather, it is a mechanism for identifying and addressing the rare but critical cases in which new evidence calls into question the factual correctness of a conviction. Each application is carefully reviewed by a committee that evaluates whether further investigation is warranted.

The process also emphasizes transparency and collaboration. Applicants must agree to fully cooperate with the review, including providing access to all relevant information. Where appropriate, the District Attorney's Office

works with external organizations such as the **Innocence Project** and the **Innocence Center**. This collaborative approach helps ensure that claims are thoroughly vetted and that all available expertise is brought to bear in the search for truth.

Importantly, the CRC retains discretion in determining which cases merit review. This ensures that resources are directed toward claims that meet the established criteria and present a meaningful basis for further investigation. While the number of cases that ultimately result in relief may be small, the existence of the process itself reflects a broader principle: justice demands not only confidence in convictions, but also the humility to revisit them when credible evidence warrants.

The Balance at the Heart of Justice

The work of the Riverside County District Attorney's Office reflects the balance inherent in the concept of justice. It requires strength and compassion, accountability and fairness, certainty and openness to reconsideration. It means protecting victims while safeguarding the rights of the accused. It means pursuing punishment when necessary and pursuing rehabilitation when appropriate.

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Jared Haringsma is a 20-year Riverside County District Attorney, and current chief assistant district attorney.

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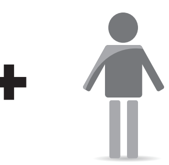
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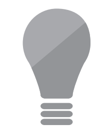
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Access to Justice in the Appellate Court

Innovations and Practices of Presiding Justice Manuel A. Ramirez

by Donald A. Davio, Jr.

Ramirez Court Innovations and Practices

The Honorable Manuel A. Ramirez (P.J. Ramirez) is the Presiding Justice of Division Two of the Fourth District California State Court of Appeal. Because the Ramirez Court is by far the Fourth District, Division Two's longest administration by a presiding justice, thus far lasting more than 33 years (beginning December 27, 1990) of the division's 58 years (begun by legislation in 1965), and because Presiding Justice Ramirez led the court in bringing a number of remarkable innovations and practices to the administration of appellate justice, this article is devoted to their description.

The first four of twelve innovations/practices addressed the court's ever-rising caseload driven by the growth in population of the Inland Empire, California's fastest growing region. The second four addressed general administrative issues. The third four concern community outreach.

1. Backlog Tracking and Reduction

Faced with one of the largest backlogs (at one point including over 700 fully-briefed civil appeals) and highest caseloads per justice in the country in the early 1990's, Presiding Justice Ramirez continued Division Two's tradition of striving to remain current, even though its caseload per justice substantially exceeded Judicial Council guidelines. Under his leadership, the justices and staff of Division Two took on the challenge of reducing its backlog and becoming current again using whatever resources the State of California saw fit to provide. Using filing projections based on fully-briefed case trailing averages and with the agreement of justices and staff, starting in 1994 the Presiding Justice assigned the cases necessary not only to keep up with the caseload estimates, but also to gradually reduce the backlog. The court became current in three years. To prevent a recurrence of a backlog of undecided cases, Presiding Justice Ramirez devised spreadsheet charts using state and district statistics to track caseloads and inventories, both to warn of future rising backlogs and to support budget change proposals for additional justices and staff.

2. Doing As Many Cases As Reasonably Possible—Not Just The Cases Assigned

Underlying the success of backlog tracking and reduction, a traditional Division Two attitude and the Presiding Justice's learned tradition fueled the court's catching up with its caseload.

The circuit-riding history of the Fourth District, engrained the practice of completing all the cases assigned during each four-month period before the court left for the next of its three distant locations. In Division Two during Presiding Justice Gardiner's administration, this history manifested in the monthly assignment of the most difficult cases to chambers and the absorption of the remainder by the Presiding Justice (known to do as many as 30 of the easier criminal appeals in a month) and central staff. This worked well until the huge case increases of the late 1980s that produced the huge backlog that Presiding Justice Ramirez inherited.

Presiding Justice Ramirez grew up working hard and took naturally to the case-management orientation provided by his municipal court presiding judge who taught him with a parable here paraphrased: "Every day starts with a big pile of sand. Everyone gets a shovel. Everyone keeps shoveling the sand until the pile is gone. If you run out of sand to shovel, come to me and I will find you more sand to shovel. No one goes home until the sand pile is gone."

This Division Two attitude and the Presiding Justice's learned tradition produced a case management philosophy by no means unique to Division Two or the Presiding Justice, but not universally shared by the justices and staffs of the California appellate courts. That philosophy holds that courts are obligated to exert the reasonably maximum effort necessary to stay current providing well-reasoned opinions using the resources that the People, through their elected Legislative and Executive Branches, see fit to devote to the Judicial Branch. Of course, the justices and their staff in appellate courts that have the reasonably-maximum-effort approach do as many cases as they reasonably and possibly can and use budget change proposals based on caseload statistics to influence the other two branches to increase the provided resources. The flexibility of the work-as-smart-and-hard-as-each-can approach to each case ensures the court will decide the most cases reasonably possible. Presiding Justice Ramirez considered himself fortunate to have worked with justices and staff who historically, and for the most part currently, share that attitude and tradition.

Appellate courts that do not have the reasonably-maximum-effort approach usually each month assign fixed numbers of cases, or equal total-predicted-workloads of cases, to justices and staffs; these courts generally use budget change proposals based on large backlogs to obtain additional resources. The flawed thinking behind this latter approach exposes itself once one considers or experiences, or both, the impossibility of predicting how much time and effort will be consumed by either a fixed number of cases or a predicted-to-be-equal total caseload—both approaches ignore the unpredictability of the actual workload of a particular case or number of cases. The tendency of such workload predictions is to attempt to achieve a realistic equality of workload by overestimating the time and effort required to do any particular month's number, or workload value, of cases assigned—everyone complains to the estimator about perceived workload under-estimations while no one complains about workload over-estimations. The result is that work

on over-estimated cases expands to fill the time/estimate predictions and under-estimations result in assigned case decreases. Either way, backlogs are likely, and they become certain if cases filed increases—the inflexibility of just doing the work assigned ensures the court will decide fewer cases than reasonably possible to prevent a backlog.

Of course, unless this court had been characterized by doing-as-many-cases-as-reasonably-possible—not just-the-cases-assigned, the backlog tracking and reduction projection assignment of cases would not have produced the dramatic results it did.

Two additional innovations addressed, and continue to address, the court's ever-rising caseload driven by the growth in population of the Inland Empire, California's fastest growing region.

3. Volunteer-Attorney-Mediated, Mandatory Civil Appellate Settlement

Instead of leaving pending cases to remain undecided while the court worked on its backlog of civil appeals, Presiding Justice Ramirez developed Justice Hollenhorst's idea of a civil appellate settlement program using volunteer attorneys, freeing justices to decide cases that could not be settled. He made the program mandatory as the Presiding Justice determined based on the case type, parties' input, and his own settlement sense and experience. He worked with the Riverside and San Bernardino County Bar Associations to create a list of volunteer attorney mediators, who started holding settlement conferences at the court in mid-1991. He worked with Judicial Council staff to create a settlement conference coordinator position, to select the volunteer attorney mediator based on availability and area of expertise, to facilitate both online and in person mediations, and to track settlement results. The program contributed significantly to backlog reduction settling fully-briefed appeals. The Presiding Justice then shifted to pre-briefing settlement mediation. (See Ct. App., 4th Dist., Local Rules of Ct., rule 4(c).) The program won the 1997 Kleps Award for Administrative Excellence because other appellate settlement programs at the time either depended solely on the willingness of the litigants to attempt settlement or used as mediators appellate justices or attorneys or superior court judges sitting pro tem. The program has proved its worth settling over 1,500 civil appeals in its 30-year history.

4. Jurisdictional Docketing Statement Screening by Central Staff Attorney

Again in response to the caseload and backlog challenge, and noting the occasional appeal that found its way through the record and briefing processes only to reveal a jurisdictional defect, the PJ began using a staff attorney to review the timeliness and appealability of each civil appeal immediately after the filing of the notice of appeal. (Ct. App., Fourth Dist., Div. 2, Local Rules, rule 9, Civil Docketing Statement.) The civil docketing statement was another Hollenhorst Court innovation that *depended on review by the clerk's office* since the rule's effective date (Sept. 24, 1990). However, shortly after the PJ arrived at the court in early 1991, in consultation with the clerk's office and staff attorneys, the PJ determined that docketing statement review *required attorney review* because of the legal knowledge and research skills required to spot and accurately decide questions of appealability and timeliness. The docketing statement became the model out of which the current statewide civil case information statement developed. (Compare Cal. Rules of Court, rule 8.100(g).)

These first four innovations were driven by the backlog of the early '90s. The next four addressed general appellate court administration.

5. Budgeting Year-End Funds for Annual Technology Update

Before the Judicial Council completely took over the purchase of word processing equipment, the Presiding Justice annually met with the IT specialist, clerk, and managing attorney to keep the personal computers up to date, as well as other office equipment. The court at the time benefitted greatly from an IT specialist who knew how to update main processors, core and hard drive memory, servers and the like inexpensively without buying whole new computers. The result was the best computer equipment in the state Court of Appeal for our core industry—processing words.

The next innovation has proved to be Fourth District, Division Two's most significant, and controversial, innovation.

6. Mailing Tentative Opinions In All Cases With Oral Argument Waiver Notices

In the mid-1990's Presiding Justice Ramirez took another then recent Hollenhorst Court innovation—the release of a "tentative opinion" a few days before oral argument to counsel who had already requested oral argument—and modified the related timing and procedures so as to release in *every case* the tentative opinion *with the "oral argument waiver notice"* at least *a month in advance* of oral argument. These modifications not only preserved the tentative opinion by making it clerically workable, but also broadened and enhanced its utility, making the tentative opinion an even more significant advancement in appellate court due process, transparency, and efficiency. The understanding of this innovation requires and merits a more detailed explanation.

The historical practice of almost all federal and state reviewing courts (supreme and appellate) has been to hold oral argument after a case has been fully briefed. Oral argument is held before the three-justice panel deciding the case in both the state courts of appeal and the federal circuit courts of appeals. The practice in many intermediate (as opposed to supreme) appellate courts is to have one of the three justices as prospective author prepare their panel colleagues for oral argument by drafting and circulating a document discussing the issues and often proposing a resolution and final decision. This document has been variously called a "bench memorandum" or "calendar memorandum" or "tentative opinion," which will often be called a "tentative" in this article for ease of reference. Historically in the Fourth District, Division Two, the tentative was to be completed for discussion at a "calendar conference" the Thursday before oral argument held the following first Tuesday and Wednesday of each month and was not mailed to the parties. If oral argument did not change the panel's mind, and depending on how complete and uncontroversial the discussions and proposed resolutions and final decision, the tentative essentially became the

final opinion deciding the case. Tentatives in all courts have traditionally been confidential to the court and not shared with the litigants or the public, which is why the recent leaking of a U.S. Supreme Court draft opinion caused such a scandal in the recent right-to-abortion case (*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, No. 19-1392, 597 U.S. ___ (2022)).

The secrecy of the tentative means that, at two strategic points in the appellate process, the litigants have no idea what the reviewing court thinks about the case after having considered their briefs. Those points are first, the post-briefing decision whether to request oral argument and, second, the pre-oral-argument decision as to what arguments to prepare for and make at the oral argument hearing. "Flying blind" at these points causes cautious counsel to regularly request oral argument and reargue every argument already briefed. Thus, oral arguments, without counsel knowing the court's fully briefed thinking, often have little significance, last longer, and clog calendars.

Associate Justice Hollenhorst articulately discussed the success and benefits of the Hollenhorst court's original innovation, as well as its problems and challenges, in a law review article. (Thomas E. Hollenhorst, "Tentative Opinons: An Analysis of Their Benefit in the Appellate Court of California," *Santa Clara L. Rev.* (Jan. 1, 1995) Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 1.) The original innovation of Justices Hollenhorst, Dabney, and McDaniel was a brilliant and important achievement in the advancement of appellate procedure. It thoroughly explained the court's legal reasoning and its basis in the record with legal, as well as record, citations. It benefited not only counsel, but especially parties representing themselves. Not only did it increase the quality of oral argument dramatically, but it also allowed the reduction of oral argument per side from 30 to 15 minutes.

However, unintended consequences of the original tentative opinion procedure could have resulted in the tentative's eventual abandonment. That procedure was to release the tentative 10 days before oral argument only in cases in which oral argument had been requested. The result was a dramatic increase in cases requesting oral argument (the only way to see the tentative) and an equally dramatic increase in belated oral-argument waivers (recognizing the futility of oral argument having read the tentative). The increased oral argument requests—approaching the totality of waiver notices mailed—required the clerk's office ("clerk") to create and mail inflated formal calendars 30 days before oral argument only to have them deflated after the tentatives were mailed 10 days before oral argument as the waivers flooded in the week before oral argument. Because the justices deciding the cases did not want to waste their time reviewing tentatives in cases in which the parties might belatedly waive oral argument, they had to concentrate their oral argument preparation on the weekend before oral argument after at least some of the late waivers had been received. Even then in a small, but regular, percentage of cases, counsel and self-represented parties would call in their waivers the day before or the day of oral argument, or just not appear without any notice to the court or opposing counsel. These unforeseen consequences might have resulted in the eventual abandonment of the tentative's pre-argument release.

The P.J. Ramirez considered with staff an obvious solution of the inflated-formal-calendar problem—delay the preparation and mailing of the formal calendar until 10 days or so after the tentatives had been mailed. That way the clerk could prepare a formal calendar already trimmed down by the waivers. However, to do so would still require two separate mailings: first of the oral-argument-waiver notice when the case was fully briefed and second of the tentative in the cases requesting oral argument. This procedure would have avoided the belated, last-minute changes to the formal calendar, saved the justices from packing calendar preparation into the weekend before oral argument, and afforded counsel the tentative opinion to aid in making the final decision whether to request oral argument. However, counsel would still have to twice consult with clients and evaluate the case (once without the tentative and once with the tentative) and still caused an initial pre-tentative inflation of oral argument requests with a corresponding flood of post-tentative waivers, twice burdening the clerk. Thus, this possible modification to the Hollenhorst court's separate mailings of the waiver notice and tentative still wasted clerical resources and increased litigants' costs, threatening the continued existence of the tentative program.

What the P.J. Ramirez finally decided was to combine the separate mailings—to mail the oral-argument-waiver notice *with* the tentative *in every case*. Key reasons why the Hollenhorst court had not mailed the tentative in every case were to reduce postage and clerical workload by restricting the tentative mailing to those cases that would be orally argued. However, as explained above, the waiver notice without the tentative effectively turned the waiver notice into a request for a tentative with the result that the percentage of cases in which the tentative was mailed approached 100 per cent anyway. Thus, the increase in oral argument requests just to obtain the tentative, resulting from mailing the oral-argument-waiver notice without the tentative, significantly decreased the postage and workload savings hoped for by the Hollenhorst court. So, the Presiding Justice reasoned, since the waiver notice had to be mailed, why not mail the tentative with it, thereby reducing two mailings to one, saving clerical and litigant time as well as postage and attorney fees, thus approaching a break-even cost point.

The Presiding Justice finally took this bold (opposed by some of his colleagues), transforming step for a number of other reasons in addition to time and cost savings. These reasons can be better understood in the course of a more detailed explanation of the Fourth District, Division Two's post-briefing process under the new tentative procedure.

Instead of first mailing a waiver notice and calendaring a case once fully briefed as under the Hollenhorst court's original tentative procedure, under the new procedure a fully-briefed case is now randomly assigned to a justice as prospective author for preparation of the tentative opinion without mailing the waiver notice and calendaring a date for oral argument. This removes the pressure of an immediate deadline allowing more flexibility in dealing with the complexity and difficulty of each case and managing each chambers' case inventory. Not placing the case on a particular calendar means that the authoring justice does not know whether the

case will be orally argued (avoiding the preferential treatment of orally argued cases) or who the two other justices assigned to the panel will be (relying on the written tentative as a more thorough, efficient, and convenient means of informing panel colleagues about a case than oral discussion).

Throughout the month at the end of which the clerk will mail the formal calendar, the judicial assistants (JAs) circulate the authors' tentative opinions with the briefs to the panel justices, who can thoroughly inform themselves about the case at their convenience without the necessity of randomly occurring oral discussions interrupting their other work. The consideration and approval of circulating tentative opinions largely displaces the traditional discussion of cases at the calendar conference, which has become more administrative in character and less time consuming. Once approved by the panel, the JA matches each tentative with the appropriate notice (either that the court is ordering that oral argument will be held or that it may be waived within 12 days) and letter about the tentative (either that oral argument should be shaped by the tentative and not a repetition of the briefs or that the court is willing to submit the case on the tentative without oral argument). If one or two of the justices disagree with the tentative, the justices confer as to whether to include in the letter a caution that the tentative does not reflect a unanimous or majority view. The JA sends the tentative with the notice and letter to the clerk simply for mailing, so the clerk does not have to decide which notice or letter to send with each case, again saving clerical resources.

Upon expiration of the 12-day period without a timely oral argument request, the cases are deemed waived and submitted, and in the usual course the author recirculates the tentative opinion as the final opinion for signature to the panel and then to the clerk for filing usually within a week. Thus, the final opinion deciding non-orally-argued cases, which are generally simpler and less controversial, are filed a month or more before the final opinions in orally argued cases, just as they should be. Note also that, instead of a waived case being short-shrifted in the opinion-writing stage because the waived status is known, waived cases are automatically given the same timely consideration as orally-argued cases.

If oral argument is timely requested, the clerk calendars the case for oral argument on the first Tuesday-Wednesday of the month after next and mails the formal calendar before the end of the month, affording counsel more than 30-days' notice. Although the litigants have only 12 days to decide whether to request oral argument (in effect a full 10 business days—two more than when only given 10 days), they will then have the 30-plus-day notice period to shape their oral argument, providing counsel with more time to fit the work into their schedule than when the tentatives were mailed 10 days before oral argument. The justices also have more flexibility in preparing for oral argument than when they were still uncertain which cases would waive after the litigants read the tentative 10 days before oral argument.

As might be expected with counsel seeing in the tentative the thoroughness of the court's review of the record and quality of the court's reasoning in response to the briefing, oral argument waivers increased significantly. A majority of appointed appellants' counsel in criminal, delinquency, and dependency cases waive oral argument—a substantial increase in roughly 80% of the court's caseload. Something on the order of only 10-20% of private counsel cases waive, which is to be expected but, a still notable increase in oral argument waivers. Although exact statistics have not been kept, the court has been able to hear its orally argued cases within its traditional two-day calendar for decades despite its caseload-driven growth in justices from three in 1965 to the current eight. Of course, cutting oral argument time in half as a result of the tentative's early release (a benefit of the Hollenhorst court's original innovation) explains in part some of that ability, but not when the caseload since then has increased more than twice. Further evidence of an anecdotal character is provided from counsels' testimony that they and their clients have felt more comfortable waiving oral argument if they have been persuaded by the unassailable character of the court's tentative decision.

Another effect of mailing the tentative with the waiver notice was that, when oral argument was waived, counsel occasionally pointed out flaws in the opinion that would not change the result but would have been raised in oral argument, leading to the same increase in quality as if the case had been orally argued. The early release of the tentative in both waived and orally-argued cases works as a kind of quality assurance program.

Finally, the tentative makes the appellate process more transparent. Instead of the justices hiding their thinking from appellate counsel, they invite counsel into the appellate decision-making process, encouraging more pointed debate and consideration of the decisive issues in a case. This results from the change in the character of oral argument from an argument between opposing counsel into a discussion between the tentatively losing party and the panel, with opposing counsel interjecting as needed. After oral argument with a tentative opinion, counsel and their clients can be surer that they had been fully heard even when they lose. Having a tentative especially assists self-representing clients, who need the extra guidance provided in understanding their case and deciding what to say at the hearing, and increases their satisfaction with the justice they have received.

By extending the tentative to every litigant and mailing it out with the oral argument waiver notice and letter, Presiding Justice Ramirez made the tentative opinion workable, enhanced and spread its benefits to every case, and drew back the curtain on a critical stage in the appellate decision making process.

7. Just-in-Time Weekly Assignment Based on Weekly Surveys of Untouched Cases

As mentioned above, describing the different treatment of waived cases under the tentative opinion program, before the clerk began mailing tentatives with the oral argument waiver notices, traditionally the Fourth District, Division Two, along with most other California appellate courts, monthly assigned to justices and staff fully-briefed cases already calendared for oral argument. The pressure was then on each justice and the justice's staff to complete within the four weeks before the calendar conference all the bench mem-

oranda in their assigned cases. While the majority of the memoranda were timely completed, regularly some were not, requiring the postponement of oral argument to a later month's calendar—more work for an already busy clerk. The reason for assigning calendared-oral-argument cases was to prevent appellate court delay in disposing of cases and to influence opinion drafters to achieve work-completion standards.

These goals were too frequently not achieved for several reasons, one of which was mentioned above—delay in the disposition of waived cases put aside to complete tentatives set for oral argument, resulting in hidden chamber and central staff backlogs. The core reason was the unpredictable variability of the time and effort required to prepare tentatives in particular cases. Failing to have the tentative ready by the calendar conference necessitated the continuance of oral argument. These continued cases crowded later calendars with multiple unique panels and made additional work for the clerk. The pressure to complete the work stressed opinion drafters and adversely affected opinion quality, job satisfaction, and morale.

A more administratively realistic and humane approach uses annual opinions drafted/filed per month to monitor chambers and central staff effectiveness and assigns cases weekly to chambers, or when individual central staff are ready for them, all without the necessity of meeting monthly calendar deadlines. Chambers and central staff effectiveness takes into consideration the number of chambers-level, difficult-chambers-level, and central-staff-level cases the justices and their chambers or assigned central staff attorneys complete. This management technique as applied to chambers relies upon weekly surveys of assigned cases unworked by justices or their attorneys; cases are then assigned weekly to keep the unworked cases in the chambers within a mid-single-digit range, which assures the chambers does not run short of assigned cases to begin working. The managing or supervising attorney also assigns cases more or less weekly to each central staff attorney keeping their personal inventories in the two-to-three range. The result is that neither chambers nor central staff are either looking for another case or building a backlog.

Getting rid of the monthly assignment of calendared cases has other benefits as well. Instead of the mailing of tentative opinions with 12-day oral argument waiver notices bunching up just before the calendar conference, without that deadline a time-consuming tentative opinion can just be mailed out for the next oral argument calendar thereby evening out the clerical workload. The justices' consideration of circulating tentative opinions is also spread throughout the month rather than bunching up before the calendar conference deadline.

8. Tracking and Training Superior Court Clerk Appellate Divisions

The preparation of records by the superior court clerk appellate divisions sometimes adds as much as several months to the time an appeal takes. P.J. Ramirez has encouraged the use of quarterly Judicial Council statistics tracking record preparation time and backlog statistics from the filing of the notice of appeal in the superior court clerk's office to the filing of the record in the appellate court. He has also urged a constructive and helpful approach to any appellate delay, starting with the appellate court clerk discussing accuracy and delay problems with the appellate division supervisor. He has encouraged the appellate clerk to step up its efforts to decrease errors and delays by providing access to knowledgeable specialist deputy clerks to correct errors in the inclusion or omission of documents in the clerk's transcript, thereby performing a kind of ad hoc training that can effectively increase appellate division accuracy and efficiency. He has also increased the assistance with tardy reporters by denying extensions and issuing orders to show cause. He has approved the managing attorney presenting PowerPoint presentations and discussion to superior court clerks about the rules governing the documents that belong in clerk's transcripts in different case categories.

The way these eight appellate court innovations and procedures were developed and carried out reflect P.J. Ramirez's style and character as an administrator and court leader. He relishes thinking outside the box, loves suggestions, listens to and includes his colleagues and staff in improving court administration, but is not afraid to stand against them when he is sure and has the authority to take responsibility for the decision himself.

Presiding Justice Ramirez's administration has been characterized by a final four innovations of a different kind—community outreach.

9. Design and Construction of California's First Appellate Courthouse

The court's building provides the foundation for the court's outreach into the community. Winston Churchill said of the rebuilding of the House of Commons: "We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us." The Presiding Justice used that quotation to explain at the celebration of the building's opening how it was designed to represent the character of the court's Inland Empire jurisdiction (Riverside, San Bernardino, and Inyo Counties). The building does so in its California Mission Revival architecture (the stylized lattice work and courtyard from Riverside's Mission Inn; the double bell towers from the Santa Barbara Mission) combined with the Greco-Roman-Enlightenment legal ideals represented in Classical Federalist architecture (stylized colonnaded portico, entrance, and rotunda from the Jefferson Library—University of Virginia). This richly symbolic building inspires everyone who seeks justice at our court.

By the mid 1990's, the inadequacy of downtown San Bernardino's Safeco building for the growing court was recognized. Presiding Justice Ramirez led the court in choosing the location in Riverside and in the design and construction of California's first stand-alone building designed to be a state appellate courthouse, followed in later years by the appellate courts in Fresno, Santa Ana, and San Jose. It was also the first state appellate court building to be bid by an architect-builder team and designed and built to suit. The financing was also innovative—the City of Riverside paying

for the land, design, and construction and leasing it to the state for 20 years after which the state owned the building. The use of "value engineering" (e.g., marble floors in the entry, but artificial flooring elsewhere, and putting used bookcases on rolling carriages so the library could be used as a large meeting room) helped the court complete the building under the budgeted $7,000,000, returning about $200,000 to the state's general fund. In December 1999, the court moved out of its historic seat in San Bernardino into its current location at the northeast corner of Twelfth and Lime Streets in Riverside.

10. Gallery Art Displays

While art cannot be purchased with state funds for public buildings, art museums and foundations are often looking for places their art can be displayed. They often require pin lighting for proper presentation, so the Presiding Justice had pin lighting installed during construction in hallways and conference rooms. He was able to obtain art from the Mission Inn, Riverside Art Museum, and others. (E.g., see Lukits Plein Air Water Colors display in upstairs hallway—courtesy of Jonathan Art Foundation.)

11. High School "Outreach Plus"

In 2004 P.J. Ramirez created the "Outreach Plus" program, an innovative court-community outreach program with the advice and consent of his colleagues. The ongoing program responds to the Judicial Council's emphasis on court and community collaboration. The justices hold two oral arguments in actual criminal appeals in the presence of students in a high school auditorium. This unusual location cannot be successfully used without the essential and valuable cooperation of appellate counsel. Oral argument is followed by a question-answer session by the justices, and often counsel as well. The public is invited to attend the oral argument "Outreach" along with the students.

The Court of Appeal had held "Outreach" oral arguments at Riverside and San Bernardino County high schools since the late 1990's, but the justices did not interact directly with the students until 2004. This interaction is the "Plus," which occurs before and after oral argument. Before, over a continental-style breakfast, the appellate justices mingle with a select group of students, usually including student body officers and mock trial participants. After, the justices visit a variety of students in their classrooms. At the before and after sessions, the justices are regularly joined by local judges and lawyers to talk to the students about the California appellate and superior courts, legal careers, and the benefits of completing their high school and college educations.

"Outreach Plus" results from the collaboration of the Court of Appeal with the high school, local superior court, and bar association. High school involvement through its principal, administrators, and teachers ensures the success of Outreach Plus. Also indispensable are counsel for the appellants, deputy attorneys general for the People, who must appear at high school locations requiring additional scheduling, arrangements, and travel time.

"Outreach Plus" has been applauded by both legal and educational participants and fulfills the Judicial Councils' aspirations for court and community collaboration.

12. John G. Gabbert Historic Oral Argument and Lecture Series

In 2009, P.J. Ramirez held the first recreation of a historic oral argument in honor of retired Division Two Justice John G. Gabbert. All the justices sat on the bench, with the retired honoree as well for the first two sessions. The estimated 350-400 attending saw the oral proceedings not only in the courtroom, but throughout the court wherever closed circuit television was available, including the justices conference room and chambers. The oral argument reenactments were accompanied with educational displays throughout the court of photographs, art, and documents setting the historical background of the cases; the public attending were permitted access throughout the courthouse to view the displays. In addition to the distinguished counsel presenting argument, people involved in the cases gave personal testimony about their experiences related to the cases. The community impact of these programs was profound, especially for the particular community concerned. The court conducted the proceedings and displayed the documentation in published special sessions: *Korematsu v. United States* (2009) 176 Cal. App. 4th, 1614-1695; *Brown v. Board of Education* (2011) 198 Cal. App. 4th 1618-1712); *Mendez v. School District*, and the Nuremberg Trials. The Judicial Council's educational branch made video recordings of the oral proceedings.

The extraordinary meaning of these special sessions of the court must be celebrated themselves. They were moments of reconciliation and redemption—akin to the "restorative justice" of Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation proceedings at the end of apartheid in South Africa. The wrongs done to Japanese-Americans, to African-Americans, to Mexican-Americans, and to European Jews were admitted in Special Sessions of the California Court of Appeal, Fourth District, Division Two, and recorded and published in the Official California Reports. The Court of Appeal justices, participants, and audience implicitly made those admissions by coming to hear the compelling testimony of the survivors (personally and through family and representatives) of the persecution and discrimination they suffered and conquered. By this telling and listening and admitting, the Gabbert Historic Oral Argument and Lecture Series traveled along the road to restorative justice, reconciliation, renewal and healing of our country and world.

As Presiding Justice Ramirez commenced his fourth decade in 2021 leading the court into its eighth decade, these innovations reveal the mind and heart not only of a visionary leader, but also a detailed and practical innovator, planning and executing new programs for successful appellate administration and access to justice in the appellate court.

Donald A. Davio, Jr. was the managing attorney for the California Court of Appeal, Fourth District, Division Two from 1990 to 2020.

Access to Justice in Immigration: A System Beckoning Change

by Alejandro Barraza

Access to justice is a foundational principle of the American legal system, but, in today's landscape of immigration law, it is unraveling, deteriorating, and rapidly melting like The Wicked Witch of the West. Unlike in criminal proceedings, noncitizens (which include but are not limited to individuals with no status, individuals who are in the process of obtaining status like victims of crime, and legal permanent residents) in removal proceedings have no constitutional right to appointed counsel when they appear in Immigration Court. Immigration Court is a civil court system run by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) where Immigration Judges decide whether a noncitizen may remain in the United States or removed. Immigration Judges are federal employees appointed by the EOIR, which is part of the U.S. Department of Justice, and function as administrative judges within the executive branch.

On this treacherous yellow brick road, noncitizens, who typically are not fluent in English, must secure and fund their own representation while navigating a high-stakes legal system. One wrong turn, a failure to check-in with ICE due to something out of their control or a failure to meet a deadline, and they are foreclosed into a world of consequences that include deportation, detention, family separation, and loss of lawful status. With these consequences at hand and structure of the EOIR, access to counsel is essential to fairness.

The representation gap in Immigration Court is vast, and this gap will continue to widen. According to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), in 2020 – 2022, noncitizen representation rates in removal proceedings were historically around 60-65%.[1] In 2025, noncitizen representation rates in removal proceedings were at around 26-38%. This stark representation gap can be attributed to the re-opening of thousands of cases which were administratively closed, the ever increasing detention of noncitizens at their home, place of employment, and at the parking lot of our own Superior Courts, demand has far outpaced legal capacity, representation if prohibitively expensive to many noncitizens (especially for those in immigration detention), a change of policy in our Immigration Courts that has led to pushing out of experienced Immigration Judges and a warning to younger attorneys who suffer from the inkling of wanting to help guide and protect Dorothy.

Similar to Dorothy, access to counsel is outcome determinative. Noncitizens with an attorney were much less likely to be ordered removed. Using immigration court data from the fiscal year of 2019 through 2024, the American Immigration Counsel provided a report examining the role of legal representation in shaping outcomes in immigration court proceedings.[2] The American Immigration Counsel's report found that 26.9% of respondents with legal representation were ordered removed, compared to 61.8% of unrepresented respondents. Legal representation leads to much higher rates of establishing eligibility for relief, identifying criminal convictions that are eligible for post-conviction relief, and noncitizens are much more likely to appear in Immigration Court because they have counsel at their side.

The Inland Empire offers a unique lens through which to examine these challenges because the combination of high need and limited legal infrastructure. There is no regular non-detained immigration court located in Riverside or San Bernardino counties. The primary Immigration Court is Adelanto Immigration Court, which is located adjacent to the Adelanto detention complex, and only oversees detained matters. As a result, depending on where you live in the Inland Empire, non-detained matters are heard in Santa Ana, Los Angeles, or Imperial, California. For noncitizens living in the Inland Empire, in addition to navigating the treacherous yellow brick road, they now must address transportation barriers, geographic distance, and limited availability of attorneys in their cities.

Against this Kansas-seismic tornado, the role of our legal community is critical. The Inland Empire has a variety of non-profits that do amazing work. For example, since 1958, Inland Counties Legal Services (ICLS) has provided free legal services to low-income residents, seniors, and people with disabilities in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. ICLS attorneys are extremely involved in the Inland Empire Legal Community and are strong advocates for justice for all our community. Private attorneys, especially those practicing at the intersection of criminal defense and immigration law, are in a unique position to help close the gap.

The Defense Bar can also play a role. Criminal defense attorneys can conduct an early intervention in criminal cases of noncitizens, informed plea negotiations, and, if necessary, post-conviction relief. A vacatur of plea can allow a legal permanent resident to exit removal proceedings or allow an individual with no status to see relief that was initially barred due to a conviction.

Ultimately, there are no ruby slippers. Access to justice in immigration law is a yellow brick road whose destination changes every day. However, our willingness to engage with the beast through pro bono work, mentorship, or simply adopting practices that makes representation in our line of law more accessible is a step forward.

Alejandro Barraza, Esq., is partner at Arsany and Barraza, Attorneys at Law. His areas of practice are criminal and immigration. He is the treasurer of HBAIE, RCBA Director-at-Large, a member of the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court, a past-president of APALIE and a fortunate father and husband.

1 https://tracreports.org/reports/744/

2 https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/immigration-court/

An Epiphany

by Sarah Abundis

Currently, I am interning with the Riverside County Public Defender's Office. In my internship, I have learned firsthand about what justice means. When I began my internship, I was unsure of what justice meant and what it even meant in practice to help others. In my internship, I have witnessed how justice is served best when a well-experienced attorney represents a defendant and gives them a chance at a fair hearing and process.

I obtained this internship through sheer luck and good fortune. I attended California Baptist University, and one day in my Institutions and Community Corrections class, my professor brought in Riverside County Assistant Public Defender Judith Gweon to speak. My professor at the time, Dr. Leach, had informed us that a public defender was coming to our class to give her perspective on the criminal justice system. However, I was aspiring to be a prosecutor at the time, so did not think much of this opportunity.

Ms. Gweon spoke to us about how the people she represented were not just clients, they were people who had histories, and those histories often provided the 'why' for the reason they had committed whatever criminal act they were charged. In that moment, my eyes were opened, and I had an epiphany, in the sense that I had never considered or entertained the idea that people may have underlying factors that contributed to them committing a crime. The simple fact that Ms. Gweon had mentioned this sparked an interest in me that I had thought lost. I stayed after the lecture, something I never do, and decided to introduce myself to Ms. Gweon. We spoke at length, then I asked if the office had any internship opportunities. After some emails, I was introduced to my internship attorney and mentor, Deputy Public Defender Juanita E. Mantz, who calls herself a "punk-rock" lawyer.

As a first-generation Hispanic student at California Baptist University, I am currently double majoring in criminal justice and political science with an emphasis on the administration of justice and public administration. There was a time when I thought of being a prosecutor, but now I am focused on public defense. This is a direct result of the epiphany I had and have had in my interactions at the Public Defender's Office.

My greatest influence in wanting to help others is the result of my parents. My parents have influenced me into being the best person I can be, both for myself and others. My mother constantly reminds me to use what God has given me for the benefit of others. She is the most selfless person I know who constantly reminds me to be better. Perhaps one day, I will be an attorney who represents my clients as a deputy public defender with fairness and passion. I can only hope and dare to dream. Now I have learned that justice in the criminal justice system is when there is fairness and equity. Fairness and equity in the sense that people of any race, sex, or national origin are treated with respect and without discrimination or biases that may interfere with just treatment.

Sarah Abundis is currently studying at California Baptist University with a double major in criminal justice and political science. She is employed with the Riverside Unified School District and interns with the Law Offices of the Riverside County Public Defender.

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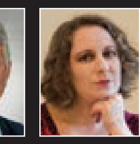
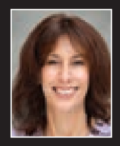

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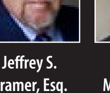
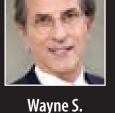
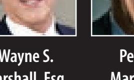
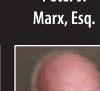
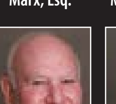

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“Establish Justice” – Officers of the Court

by Boyd Jensen

The *Preamble* to the United States Constitution contains six aspirations, the first one being “establish Justice.” The word is used thereafter, referencing our highest judicial officers. Our predecessors, left their homes; crossed oceans; walked or rode wagons; and sacrificed their lives to build and defend communities to realize those aspirations for themselves and their “Posterity.” What “justice” conceptualizes in our current “check-list” culture of cars, airplanes, cell phones, microwave ovens and rocketing to the moon, may seem wonderful and idealistic; but perhaps not of the penultimate importance, that it was to those who knew first-hand the debilitating repugnance, which injustice fostered.

I have great respect for our profession. I am humbled to play a role, believing that for justice to be disseminated, it will be as a result of **diligent Officers acting with integrity and hard work.** The California Bar Association website sets forth the oath that must be taken, before being licensed and sworn in as Officers of the Court:

“I, (licensee name) solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of an attorney and counselor at law to the best of my knowledge and ability. As an officer of the court, I will strive to conduct myself at all times with dignity, courtesy, and integrity.”

Most Officers of the Court genuinely desire to practice law with “dignity, courtesy, and integrity.” Truly, to achieve justice, those characteristics are essential, but how are they maintained? Officers of the court acting with dignity, courtesy and integrity, will not make justice obtainable, without those officers being proficient and competent.

Our world and modern culture is permeated with facts and alleged facts; opinions and alleged opinions; documents and images and alleged documents and images; all of which can be created with artificial intelligence. Which of those qualify as evidence, essential to administer justice? In civil matters, written motions and petitions are based upon “evidence” and “undisputed facts.” California Civil Jury Instructions, Instruction 106 sets forth what qualifies as “Evidence;” as well as sections 200 – 225 an entire section devoted to **EVIDENCE**.

Almost all American Bar Association accredited law schools offer clinical programs introducing students to the actual practice of law before graduation. At Pepperdine's Caruso Law School they offer the Legal Aid Clinic, the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic, the Union Rescue Mission on Skid Row in Los Angeles, the Ninth Circuit Appellate Advocacy Clinic, the Community Justice Clinic, the Restoration & Justice Clinic, the Faith and Family Mediation Clinic, the Disaster Relief Clinic and the Startup Law Clinic among other local and even international clinical, experience oriented programs.

There are excellent MCLE courses devoted to “Evidence,” but without process, learning method, practicing and experience, justice may remain cloaked or disguised. Judicial Council Form Interrogatories; Judicial Council Form Complaints; and the required Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), including Mediation, Arbitration, and Mandatory Settlement Conferences, though valuable and helpful to achieve justice, diminish and attenuate the quality of Court Officers seeking to obtain justice for a client.

Coming from a one high school town in Utah, I was petrified – albeit excited too – at the thought of going to law school, let alone working as a lawyer in California. I obtained a job as a law clerk, in a civil litigation firm, representing general liability and automobile liability, which required I learn to work through thousands of discovery quests, deposing thousands of parties, including hundreds of experts, such as doctors and police officers; and to compete with able lawyers on the other side, while trying to please sophisticated claims officials, clients, and judicial officers.

In that process, which resulted in over 50 civil jury trials and a dozen appeals, I learned about evidence, foundation, speculation, and the difference between an opinion and a fact. During this time, I was not worried about justice. I was simply trying to survive as a California lawyer. Yet I came to understand how the process achieves justice, particularly when you have 14 unpaid jurors, who are basically donating their time to fulfill their civic duty. The results were not always what I wanted, or expected. But the basis for the results could be broken down into rules of evidence, jury instructions, and my effectiveness, or what my opponent taught me. Even after California adopted arbitrations in the

70s, hundreds of arbitrations, though less formal than a jury trial, were overseen by judges, who taught me how to follow the processes of civil litigation, though in their new arbitration setting.

What I have learned, privileged as a lawyer, not only in California, but Utah and Wyoming, is that in establishing justice, the predominant imperative is Officers of the Court, acting as lawyers or judges, working with diligence and integrity. We will disagree and do so aggressively, but just as aggressively defend and never retard, the lawful exercise of our profession on behalf of clients or the organizations we represent.

Daily solicitations from vendors to draft demand letters, prepare pleadings, make special appearances, handle court calls, review medical records, and summarize deposition testimony, though convenient, may over time insulate us from clients, dulling our edge learned clinically and academically in school; and diminish our skills and capacity.

Some lawyers are new and will need mentoring. Other Officers of the Court, though experienced, may need quiet support. Following an out of county jury trial, jurors came up to me, and shocked me referring to the trial judge with profanity. Yes, she had been difficult, and particularly to me, but I defended her in the hallway with all the jurors listening in. Judges will also sometimes make mistakes, and should never be unwilling to show prerogative as a Court Officer, as a judge recently did on his own, openly acknowledging the error and providing correction.

Justice was the aspiration our founders, inscribed in our Constitution. It is up to us as Officers of the Court to maintain and continue to advance justice for us and our own posterity.

Boyd Jensen represents very public clients, including amusement parks, carnivals and fairs in California and other states, testifying before senate and assembly committees and in litigation. He is a member of the Riverside County Bar Association, RCBA Publications Committee, American Board of Trial Attorneys Advocate, and has been rated AV Preeminent for over 35 years.

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Riverside Judicial Candidate Forums Held in April

by Aidan McGloin

The Inland Empire has only one judicial race in the upcoming June 2 election. Three candidates are vying for election to a single seat in Riverside County. *Inland Empire Law Weekly* is hosting a two-hour event with each candidate. Each event will feature an hour-long conversation with *Inland Empire Law Weekly* editor Aidan McGloin, livestreamed on YouTube. The interview will be followed by audience questions and an informal meet and greet. All meetings will be held at the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce boardroom, at 3985 University Avenue, Riverside. Livestreams of the recordings will be found on *Inland Empire Law Weekly's* YouTube, and summaries of the interviews will be posted on the website, at ielaw.news. Tickets are free.

Register for the event at Eventbrite.

April 9, 5-7 p.m., **Jennifer Loflin's** interview. Loflin runs her own criminal defense firm. She has 19 years of experience in the criminal justice system. She was a San Bernardino prosecutor from 2007 to 2008, handling juvenile trial cases. From 2009 to 2011, she directed the Riverside County Bar Association's Legal Aid program, which provided free legal assistance to low income community members. She was a Riverside County public defender from 2011 until 2017, and then a Riverside prosecutor from 2017 until 2018. In both offices, she specialized in felony domestic violence, general felonies, and misdemeanor cases. She handled employment law for first responders at Castillo Harper from April 2018 until August 2019. Since October 2023, Loflin has volunteered to oversee Riverside courtrooms as a temporary judge, filling in for judges that are out of the office. She is a mother of three.

April 10, 5:30-7:30 p.m., **Michelle Paradise's** interview. Paradise joined the bar in 1997, and spent 25 years as a prosecutor, bringing over 100 cases to jury verdict, with a specialty in child abuse and homicides. She was promoted to Chief Deputy District Attorney, and placed in charge of the Major Crimes and Special Prosecution Units, in 2015. Paradise was promoted to Assistant District Attorney, overseeing the Indio and Blythe offices, in 2016. She was transferred to run the downtown office in 2019. County Executive Officer Jeff Van Wagenen invited her to join Riverside County Executive Office in 2023, as the Assistant Chief Executive Officer for Public Safety. She oversees the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Sheriff's Office, Office of Emergency Management, Riverside County Fire and Probation Departments. She also works in collaboration with Riverside Superior Court, to provide indigent defense contracts and funding resources. She is a mother of four and a grandmother to three.

April 13, 5-7 p.m., **Andrea Garcia's** interview. Garcia specializes in immigration law at the San Bernardino Public Defender's Office. She joined the State Bar in 2007, and practiced immigration law, creating her own firm, Garcia Immigration Law Group, in 2016. She was recruited to the Riverside County Public Defender's Office in 2018, to create their first immigration unit. She joined the San Bernardino Public Defender's Office, as their first attorney focused on post-conviction relief for foreign-born clients, in 2023. In addition to representing clients, she provides immigration and constitutional legal advice to public defenders. She volunteers in San Bernardino's mobile defense program and homeless courts. She has taught at the La Verne University College of Law, and Monterey College of Law, and provides training in criminal defense of foreign-born people throughout the United States. She is a mother, and lives with her family in Riverside.

Aidan McGloin is owner and operator of Inland Empire Law Weekly.

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Opposing Counsel: Judith Gweon

by Betty Fracisco

A Dedicated, Skilled, and Compassionate Public Servant.

Meet Riverside County Assistant Public Defender Judith Gweon and second in command to Public Defender Steve Harmon. Since passing the Bar, Judith has dedicated her entire career to Riverside County, fulfilling her early aspiration of "wanting to do good for others." Her adult life has been defined by service—both to the county and to her family.

Judith Gweon

Judith was born in Korea and came to Southern California as a child in 1980. Her father, trained as an engineer, became a small business owner with the support of Judith's mother. She and her brother enjoyed a happy childhood, and Judith describes herself during those years as "bookish," always reading. In high school, she joined the marching band, drill team, and journalism club, recalling her high school years as "idyllic." A memorable government class teacher, with discussions about President Lyndon B. Johnson's achievements and shortcomings, sparked her early interest in public service.

As an English major at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), Judith attended a PreLaw Club discussion titled "What It Means to Be a Public Defender." The conversation left a deep impression on her and ignited her passion for law. She went on to attend Western State University College of Law, where criminal law captivated her because every case held a human story. Internships at both the District Attorney's Office and the Public Defender's Office in Orange County ultimately confirmed that public defense was where she belonged.

Judith began her 25-year journey as deputy public defender in 2000. Her first assignment was in the misdemeanor unit—working through a mountain of paper files, meeting clients, understanding their stories, negotiating pleas, and preparing for trial. She later was assigned to Drug Court when the first Prop 36 passed, during a time when the criminal legal system began embracing treatment-based approaches for drug offenses. For more than a decade, Judith worked in the Complex Litigation Unit, a specialized division handling homicides, life sentences, gang cases, and death penalty matters. Over the course of her 20 years in the courtroom, she tried more than 80 jury trials and became an experienced death penalty trial attorney, known for her work on high-profile homicide cases.

In March 2020, Judith was promoted to supervising deputy public defender, overseeing the Domestic Violence Unit and the Writs and Appeals Unit. After the pandemic, the assistant public defender retired, and Judith was selected to step into the role. She now manages operations for Riverside County Public Defender's six offices, serving the fourth largest county in California. Judith takes pride in supporting deputy public defenders to do their best work, believing that by supporting them, she is helping their clients.

While this article was being prepared, Judith received notice from the Riverside County Board of Supervisors that the county had been awarded a state grant she authored to expand holistic defense services—Program HOPE (Holistic Outreach Participatory Enrichment). The grant will fund community outreach, support the hiring of social workers, and assist with expungements and immigration-related motions. A "Justice Van" will travel to remote areas to provide legal services. Many residents face old warrants or prior cases that prevent them from accessing housing and other essential services. Judith hopes this program will expand the Public Defender's mission, improve lives, and reduce recidivism through a more holistic approach.

Despite her demanding career, Judith has successfully raised two children. Her son is now an attorney in Washington, D.C., and her daughter is a law student at UCI. She candidly shares that she once struggled with "mom guilt," but she is deeply proud of the adults her children have become. In many ways, her life has come full circle.

Riverside County is fortunate to have such a dedicated, skilled, and compassionate public servant.

Betty Fracisco is an attorney at Garrett & Jensen in Riverside, a member of the RCBA Publications Committee, and a longtime member of the Board of Governors of California Women Lawyers.

ATTENTION RCBA MEMBERS

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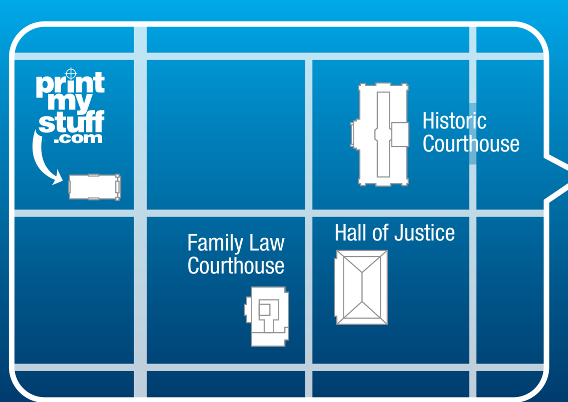

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Reading Day 2026

There is no better way to start the day than reading to students at RCBA Reading Day! The TK class was so well behaved, listened intently, and enjoyed hearing Grumpy Monkey. I hope you will mark your calendars next year to join us for Reading Day.

Megan Demshki

Back in 2006, when I was RCBA President, I started RCBA's Reading Day because I wanted our organization to become involved with making a positive difference in our community. Not only is it fun to read a book to a group of students, our presence at the schools also makes lasting impressions on the students there. This year was no different.

I read Dr. Seuss's book, *Oh, The Places You'll Go!* to 5th graders at Harada Elementary and it was fantastic. I chose this book to let these students know that they can choose their future – and by learning and reading, they will have more choices in life. "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." – Dr. Seuss

However, after I read the book, the students did not want to discuss the book. Instead, they wanted to talk to me and ask me questions about what it takes to be an attorney, what an attorney does, and how they can become an attorney. Many of them had never met an attorney before. I told them I never knew attorneys growing up. I felt they were able to relate to me because I told them about my background – an immigrant who came to America at the age of seven without speaking English; had parents who never grasped the English language that well; and my number one reason for going to law school – so people could not take advantage of my parents or me. The students really welcomed this conversation and had a plethora of follow-up questions. I was grateful to share my story with them and to encourage them to pursue their dreams/passions. And that they, too, can pursue any career with hard work and perseverance. Although the students were grateful and so kind to me – I felt like this interaction filled my heart with exactly what I needed – hope and gratitude.

I would encourage our members to participate in this Reading Day – it's only a couple of hours and it will make a positive impact on the students and you!

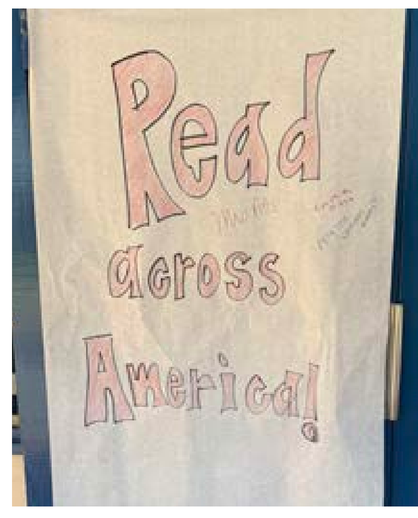
Theresa Savage

National Reading Day took on a special meaning for me this year. As a paralegal specialist with the United States Trustee Program (USTP), I had the privilege of stepping outside the office and into a classroom, and I can honestly say it was one of the most rewarding experiences.

When I arrived, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Would the students be engaged? Would they be restless? What I found was neither—I found pure, unfiltered enthusiasm. The moment I opened *What Do You Do with a Chance?* by Kobi Yamada, the room came alive. Hands shot up before I even finished a sentence. Questions flew from every direction—curious, thoughtful, and sometimes wonderfully unexpected. These children weren't just listening; they were present, in the fullest sense of the word.

Yamada's story—about a child who hesitates, lets a chance slip away, and ultimately finds the courage to reach out and grab it—seemed to resonate deeply with the students. They had a lot to say about taking chances, about being brave, and about what happens when you let fear hold you back. It was a rich, genuine conversation that I didn't expect from a room full of fourth graders, and it moved me more than I anticipated. Volunteering on National Reading Day was a reminder that sometimes the most meaningful thing we can do is show up for the next generation.

Reading is, at its core, the foundation of everything we do in the legal field. Watching those fourth graders lean in, hang on each sentence, and ask questions with such genuine



curiosity reminded me of why literacy matters so deeply—not just for future lawyers or paralegals, but for every child who will one day need to navigate the world around them.

I left the classroom feeling grateful—grateful for the teachers who do this every single day, grateful for the students who reminded me that learning is still magical, and grateful for the chance to be a small part of their day. If you haven't considered volunteering for an event like this, I encourage you to. You just might find, as I did, that you receive far more that you give.

Mary H. Avalos

Reading to the students at Harada Elementary School stirred up so many happy memories for me. My children and one grandchild attended class at this campus. The classrooms look much the same now, but with new faces! I've been to parent/teacher conferences there and had even been a room parent in several classrooms. Back then, the school was called Highland Elementary (they changed the name after the Nagbys left, fingers crossed it wasn't a reflection of my family!). Anyway, I had a wonderful day reading to the well-behaved students and chatting with other readers.

Commissioner Robert Nagby (ret.)

I had the pleasure of participating in Reading Day and I read to a TK class. I selected a book from the school's library called *In My Heart* (a book of feelings). The book was very cute as it centered on all feelings. We explored feelings such as joy, anger, fear, and excitement.

To bring the story to life, I used expressive voices, animated gestures, and exaggerated facial expressions to help the children connect with each feeling. Their responses were truly heartwarming. The students were attentive, eager to participate, and wonderfully interactive throughout the reading. It was clear they not only understood the emotions being discussed, but also felt comfortable expressing their own and boy did they have feelings!

Moments like these are extremely powerful as they emphasize the importance literacy has on emotional awareness. Contributing by reading to this amazing class was incredibly rewarding. As I left the classroom, I encouraged the students to continue reading, learning, and making us all proud.

I would gladly participate in Reading Day again. Initiatives like this play a vital role in reinforcing the value of reading and inspiring young minds to develop a lifelong love for books and knowledge. I am a firm believer that knowledge is power.

Daniela Tovar-Jalalian

Photos by Jacqueline Carey-Wilson.

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Seeking a Family Law Attorney

Redlands firm is seeking a family law attorney. A minimum of three years' experience is required. The ideal associate should have experience in all facets of family law. The candidate should possess strong legal research and writing skills. Please send your resume to: lholmer@michaelyounglaw.com.

Conference Rooms Available – RCBA Building

Conference rooms, small offices and the Gabbert Gallery meeting room at the RCBA building are available for rent on a half-day or full-day basis. Please call for pricing information, and reserve rooms in advance, by contacting Charlene or Lisa at the RCBA office, (951) 682-1015 or rcba@riversidecountybar.com..

MEMBERSHIP

The following persons have applied for membership in the Riverside County Bar Association. If there are no objections, they will become members effective April 30, 2026.

Sichen ("Sophia") Li (A) – Law Office of Zheng Qiao Chen, Corona
Jessaka Menzie – Riverside County Counsel's Office, Riverside
Aisha C. Novasky – Riverside City Attorney's Office, Riverside
Keshav Singh (A) – Avvocats & Partners, Riverside

(A) – Designates Affiliate Member

CALENDAR

APRIL

6 **Roundtable with Judge Hopp**
12:15 PM, Zoom
MCLE

7 **Family Law Section Meeting**
12:00, RCBA Gabbert Gallery
Speaker: Judge Angel Bermudez, Ret.
Topic: "Seeing the Whole Family: Eliminating Bias Through Cultural Awareness in Family Law"
MCLE: 1 hour Implicit Bias

9 **Juvenile Law Section**
12:15 PM, Zoom
Speaker: Rebecca Eckley
Topic: "The Nuts & Bolts of AB12 and Non-Minor Dependents"
MCLE

15 **Estate Planning, Probate & Elder law Section**
Noon, RCBA Gabbert Gallery
Speaker: Maria Loera, MPA
Topic: "Adult Protective Services: How to Spot Financial Elder Abuse"
MCLE

17 **General Membership Meeting**
Noon, RCBA Gabbert Gallery
Speaker: Presiding Judge Jacqueline Jackson
Topic: "State of the Riverside Superior Court"
MCLE

24 **DRS Mediation Continuing Legal Education Training**
Noon – Lunch
12:30 – 3:45 PM – Program
Speaker: Stephanie Blondell
Topic: "The Psychology of the Deal: An Exploration for Mediators"
MCLE

Events Subject To Change
For the latest calendar information please visit the RCBA's website at **riversidecountybar.com**

The Riverside Lawyer is published 11 times per year by the Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA) and is distributed to RCBA members, Riverside County judges and administrative officers of the court, community leaders and others interested in the advancement of law and justice. Advertising and announcements are due by the 6th day of the month preceding publications (e.g., October 6 for the November issue). Articles are due no later than 45 days preceding publication. All articles are subject to editing. RCBA members receive a subscription automatically. Annual subscriptions are $30.00 and single copies are $3.50.

Submission of articles and photographs to Riverside Lawyer will be deemed to be authorization and license by the author to publish the material in the *Riverside Lawyer*. The material printed in the *Riverside Lawyer* does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the RCBA, the editorial staff, the Publication Committee, or other columnists. Legal issues are not discussed for the purpose of answering specific questions. Independent research of all issues is strongly encouraged.

MISSION STATEMENT

Established in 1894

The Riverside County Bar Association, established in 1894 to foster social interaction between the bench and bar, is a professional organization that provides continuing education and offers an arena to resolve various problems that face the justice system and attorneys practicing in Riverside County.

RCBA Statement

The mission of the Riverside County Bar Association is: To serve our members, our communities, and our legal system.

Membership Benefits

Involvement in a variety of legal entities: Lawyer Referral Service (LRS), Riverside Legal Aid, Fee Arbitration, Dispute Resolution Service (DRS), Barristers, Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court, Mock Trial, State Bar Conference of Delegates, Bridging the Gap, the RCBA - Riverside Superior Court New Attorney Academy and the Riverside Bar Foundation.

Membership meetings monthly (except July and August) with keynote speakers, and participation in the many committees and sections.

Eleven issues of *Riverside Lawyer* published each year to update you on State Bar matters, ABA issues, local court rules, open forum for communication, and timely business matters.

Social gatherings throughout the year: Installation of RCBA and Barristers Officers dinner, Law Day activities, Good Citizenship Award ceremony for Riverside County high schools, Reading Day and other special activities, Continuing Legal Education brown bag lunches and section workshops. RCBA is a certified provider for MCLE programs.

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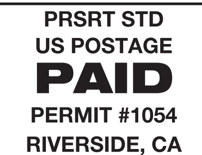

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