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NEW LAWS 2026

IN THIS
ISSUE

The State of the Riverside County Superior Court

Preparing for 2026: Ten New California Labor & Employment Laws

New Brown Act Requirements: Translation, Teleconferencing, and Hybrid Access

SB 827 Expands Training Obligations for Local Agency Officials

*Key Probate Law and Related Policy Changes
Effective January 1, 2026*



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PRESIDENT'S Message

by Megan G. Demshki



RCBA Elves Deliver Christmas Magic

The 2025 Elves Program was another resounding success. The RCBA Foundation was able to provide holiday gifts, grocery gift cards and gas cards to 45 families in need in Riverside County.

This year my family and I had the opportunity to be Shopping Elves, Wrapping Elves, and Delivery Elves for the same family, which made it especially meaningful for my young children to see the whole program from start to finish.

My children are ages 4 and nearly 2 this year. Christmas is a BIG deal at our house and the anticipation of the holiday started well before the Elves Shopping. The Elves Program served as a tangible reminder of true meaning of the holiday season and the importance of giving back to our community, especially to those who may not be as fortunate as we are.

Shopping Elves

Strapping my kids into their car seats before heading to Walmart for the Elves Shopping, I wondered to myself how this would go—Did I pack enough snacks? Did they nap enough? Was buying toys for other children going to cause confusion and an epic meltdown? Would they understand why we were doing this?

We chatted on the way to Walmart about service, about giving back to those in need, about how despite hard work—some families cannot afford the additional financial burden of buying Christmas presents. The conversations led to interesting inquiries from my 4-year-old who has really mastered the “why?” questions lately. (And I’ve learned “why” questions really lead to more introspection than I ever understood before having children of my own.)

These abstract concepts surrounding service and philanthropy for children were brought to life through the Elves Program in an approachable manner.

Upon arrival at Walmart, armed with two shopping carts and some snack-sized pretzels for the toddlers, we eagerly took the paperwork

for Family #15—four children with ages ranging from 3-17 years old and mom.

To my surprise (and frankly, relief), my children quickly found delight in helping my husband and me select gifts for the other children. We talked about their names, ages and interests. We talked about getting some “fun” gifts like toys and some practical necessities like toothbrushes and socks. We talked about staying within the budget and adding up the various priced items. We weighed the cost of different items to maximize the budget. My kids helped us narrow down the offerings. They helped us label the gifts by recipient. They ate some more snacks. By the end of the shopping trip, they were eager to find more gifts for the children.

This year the shopping budget for the children was increased (thanks to the Money Elves), which allowed us to provide quality gifts for each child including clothes, shoes, toys and other necessities.

We checked out and bagged up the presents—the Shopping Elves excursion was complete.

(And to be quite honest, my 4-year old did negotiate for a Hot Wheels car on the way out because he did “such a good job”. Perhaps he’s a future RCBA President in the making 30 years from now.)

Wrapping Elves

Just two days later, my family and I were back at the RCBA building for Elves Wrapping. I sorted through the bags in the boardroom hoping to find Family #15 was still available. I was excited to find Family #15 and bring the bags over to my family to help wrap.

We took the two big bags of presents to one of the smaller conference rooms and sorted the presents. My 4-year-old remembered the names of the children and helped us sort the gifts by recipient.

His joy reminded me to slow down in a season that is so full.

We enjoyed Christmas cookies before dinner, the joyful holiday music, and the company of the fellow RCBA members. The halls of the RCBA were busy with presents all over. We reconnected with members and their families, some that we had not seen since last year’s Elves Program. We saw new connections being fostered as the Barristers brought a huge turnout to help wrap.

My kids helped us peel off pieces of tape and place it on the packages. They helped place sticker labels on each gift. Perhaps not exactly as precisely as I would have liked, but with a lot of love.

Amidst the goodies and the revelry, I was reminded what a privilege it is to have this RCBA community – a community that welcomes our members in every age and stage of their career—including our growing families.

Delivery Elves

We packed up Family #15 for the final stage of the Elves Program—delivery. The gifts were wrapped, labeled and bowed—ready for our family. My family helped me load the gifts in my car. My 4-year-old said he hoped that the little boys like their new Hot Wheels.

We sent the gifts off with mom and hoped that the program eased the month's burden while bringing a little joy, entertainment, and comfort.

From Family #15 came a special surprise on Christmas morning. The mom texted me several photos of the children opening the presents—4 happy faces with that glisten in their eyes that only comes from Christmas magic. My own children delighted in seeing the photos—finally putting faces to the 4 names that they had grown attached to. A beautiful reminder of the joy of giving back and the importance of teaching our children about service.

My family looks forward to next year's Elves Program and the opportunity to continue to give back to our community.

Thank you to the dozens of volunteers who donated their time, talent and treasure as Money Elves, Shopping Elves, Wrapping Elves and Delivery Elves. This is such a busy time of year and your volunteerism got the work done! We hope your experience with the program was as meaningful as mine.

The Elves Program could not happen without the unwavering dedication of Brian Pearcy, his office staff and

the RCBA staff. Thank you Brian, Lucy, Ann, Charlene and Lisa for your support and commitment to the Elves Program.

Add attending an RCBA event to your 2026 resolutions!

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. We look forward to kicking off the new year with the RCBA!

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



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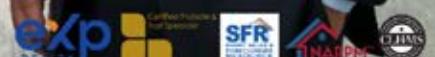
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BARRISTERS

President's Message

by Sharon P. Ramirez

As we begin a new year, I hope everyone had a chance to enjoy the holiday season with your loved ones. Whether that looked like gathering around the TV for NBA and NFL Christmas Day games, catching the highly anticipated release of *Avatar: Fire and Ash* and the *Stranger Things* finale, traveling, or simply staying home to rest and recharge, the end of the year often gives us space to slow down and reflect.

January brings with it a renewed sense of possibility. It's a natural time for goal-setting, both personally and professionally, and an opportunity to be intentional about how we want to show up in the year ahead. One idea often emphasized on a favorite of mine, the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast, is that meaningful growth is a result of intentional choices and consistent actions rather than accidental progress. Small, consistent actions, when aligned with clear goals, can compound into lasting impact in all aspects of life.

As Barristers, this mindset matters. The habits we build, the community we invest in, and the service we commit to all shape not only our careers, but the kind of legal community we create together and the individuals we become.

With 2026 underway, I wish everyone a great start to the year and invite our members to join us at upcoming Barristers events. We have an exciting year ahead with many events planned and look forward to seeing you there!

Past Events Recap

To end 2025, the Barristers and HBAIE gathered on a (warm) December afternoon to wrap gifts for the RCBA Elves Program. We had over 15 Barrister/HBAIE members in attendance through the afternoon, with many wearing festive holiday shirts and sweaters!

Afterwards, we walked over to W. Wolfskill, where we held our monthly happy hour to unwind and raffle off some Amazon gift cards. Thank you to our appetizers sponsor, Dr. Daniel Roshan of Alleviate Institute of Spine and Pain.



Thank you to everyone who came out to serve our Riverside community! It means so much to see our members show up with generosity, camaraderie, and a shared commitment to giving back to those in need.

Upcoming Events. You're Invited!

We're starting 2026 with some classics and some exciting, new events. Hope to see you there!

- **Barristers Happy Hour** – Friday, January 23, 2026, 5:30 p.m. at California Lounge at the Mission Inn – appetizers sponsored by Imani Injury Firm.
- **CLE with Barristers and HBAIE in partnership with JAMS, presentation by Hon. Chad Firetag (ret.)** – Thursday, January 29, 2026, 5:30-7:00 p.m. at JAMS, Riverside location – check out our socials and emails for more information and the registration link.
- **Puppy Yoga & Brunch** – Saturday, January 31, 2026, 10:45 a.m.-2 p.m., Riverside – we are bringing to you a brand, new event! Space is limited. For more details and to register, please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/puppy-yoga-brunch-with-the-rcba-barristers-tickets-1977312324390>
- **Scoring Attorneys for the Riverside County Mock Trial (followed by lunch)** – Saturday, February 7, 2026 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Robert Presley Hall of Justice – For more details and to register, please visit: <https://Barristers2026MockTrialScoring.eventbrite.com>.



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: Elia Vazquez, 2025–2026 Member-At-Large

Next up is Elia!

Elia is an attorney with Varner & Brandt, LLP in Riverside, where she focuses on labor, employment, and

business litigation. This is her first year serving on the Barristers Board, and she is also an active member of the Hispanic Bar Association of the Inland Empire (HBAIE). Elia joined Barristers after receiving a warm welcome from the Barristers community, which made her transition from law student to attorney much smoother, and she now hopes to provide the same support to new attorneys. She appreciates the Riverside legal community for its unique sense of camaraderie, where lawyers on both sides of the aisle can come together and build genuine connections. Outside of work, she enjoys cooking traditional Mexican dishes passed down from her grandmother and spending time outdoors.

Stay up to date on everything Barristers!

For upcoming events and updates:

Website: <https://rcbabarristers.wixsite.com/rcbabarristers>

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.



Save the Date

Riverside County Bar Association

MCLE MARATHON

Webinar via Zoom

Friday, January 30, 2026
10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

MCLE Credit: 4 Hours Total

(1 hour Ethics, 1 hour Competence, 1 hour Bias, 1 hour Wellness Competence)

You may attend all or only the session(s) in which you need credits.

More info will be forthcoming.

Preparing for 2026: Ten New California Labor & Employment Laws

by Michelle M. Wolfe

With the new year comes new labor and employment laws. California continues to serve as a national leader in worker-protective legislation, and 2026 is no exception. The California legislature focused on strengthening existing laws to expand workers' rights. As new statutes, agency regulations, and court decisions take effect, employers face expanded obligations in wage and hour compliance, workplace safety, privacy, and the use of technology in employment decisions. Below is a summary of some of the notable new laws, and unless otherwise noted, all take effect on January 1, 2026.

1. Increased Minimum Wage - Threshold for Exempt Employees

Pursuant to Labor Code section 515(a) and Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders 1 as of January 1, 2026, the minimum wage in California will increase from \$16.50 per hour to \$16.90 for all hourly/non-exempt employees.¹ California's exempt salary test remains tied to twice the minimum wage for full-time employment. This increase in the minimum wage means that exempt employees must earn a minimum annual salary of \$70,304 per year or \$5,858.67 per month. Employers should be cautious of the minimum wage requirements in their local areas because some cities have higher minimum wage requirements. Additionally, California's expanded duties test enforcement—strengthened by recent Division of Labor Standards Enforcement guidance—will continue to require employers to prove both elements of exemption (duties + salary basis) by clear evidence.²

2. Equity Act Reforms

An amendment to California's Equal Pay Act expands the definition of wages to include benefits and non-salary compensation, strengthens pay transparency, and prohibits wage gaps based on discriminatory practices.³ The term "pay scale" refers to an estimate of the expected wage range that an employer reasonably expects to pay for a job position upon hiring. This new law also prohibits employers from paying employees at wage rates less than those paid to employees of the opposite sex.

3. Ban on "Stay or Pay" Contracts

Until now, employers have been able to enter into agreements with employees to advance loans, fund assistance programs, cover the cost of tuition for a transferable credential, and enroll them in an apprenticeship program, among other reasons, while requiring the employee to remain

employed to repay the advance. Effective January 1, 2026, Assembly Bill (AB) 692 makes it unlawful for employers to include in any employment contract, or to require a worker to execute as a condition of employment, a term requiring the worker to repay an employer a debt if the worker separates from the company.⁴

Contracts entered into on or after January 1, 2026, with any "stay or pay" provisions are deemed void and unenforceable, subject to a few exceptions. For example, an employer can require an employee to repay a debt if the contract is separate from the employment contract, is not a condition of employment, specifies the repayment amount, provides a prorated repayment amount, and does not require repayment if the worker is terminated.

Employees subjected to the prohibited conduct may bring a civil action for the greater of actual damages or civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per employee.

4. Workplace Know Your Rights Act

Senate Bill (SB) 294 establishes the Workplace Know Your Rights Act. By February 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, all employers must provide a stand-alone written notice to each current employee of their rights, including labor laws, workers' compensation, notice requirements related to inspections conducted by an immigration agency, and constitutional rights.⁵ The Labor Commissioner will develop a template compliant notice for employers to use.

Additionally, this law requires employers to notify an employee's designated emergency contact if the employee is arrested or detained on the employer's worksite. If the arrest or detention occurs during work hours or while the employee is performing their job duties, but not on the worksite, the employer must notify the emergency contact only if the employer has actual knowledge of the employee's arrest or detention. Employers must provide all employees with the opportunity to designate an emergency contact by March 30, 2026.

5. Artificial Intelligence & Automated Decisionmaking in Employment

California is leading the nation in regulating employment-related AI. SB 362 (2025) establishes California's first comprehensive framework for employers utilizing Automated Decision Tools (ADTs) in hiring, promotion, discipline, or termination decisions.⁶

1 Cal. Labor Code § 515(a); IWC Wage Orders 1–17.

2 DLSE Enforcement Manual, Exemptions, updated 2024.

3 SB 642 (2025), Amending Labor Code § 1197.5.

4 SB 692 (2025), amending Labor Code § 926 and Bus. & Prof. Code § 16608.

5 SB 294 (2025), Labor Code § 1553.

6 SB 362 (2025), Cal. Civil Code § 1798.100, et seq.

Key requirements are:

- Annual bias audits by independent evaluators;
- Notice to applicants and employees before ADT use;
- Meaningful human review of adverse decisions; and
- Data minimization requirements aligned with CPRA.

6. Paid Sick Leave Expansion

California's 2026 amendments to the Healthy Workplaces/Healthy Families Act broaden the definition of "family member" so that an employee can take leave to care for a "designated person."⁷ This law defines "designated person" to mean any individual related by blood or whose association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship. To request Paid Family Leave benefits to care for a designated person, the employee must identify the designated person and, under penalty of perjury, attest to the relationship between the individual and themselves, whether by blood or in a family-like manner.

7. Paid Sick Leave for Judicial Proceedings and Jury Duty

While existing law allows employees to use Paid Sick Leave to take time off work for judicial proceedings or jury duty, AB 406 expands these rights. Employees may now use Paid Sick Leave for judicial proceedings if they or a family member are a (redefined) "victim" of certain additional (redefined) "crimes" and suffer direct or threatened physical, psychological, or financial harm due to the commission or attempted commission of the following crimes: vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, felony child abuse likely to produce great bodily harm or death, felony physical abuse of an elder or dependent adult, felony stalking, solicitation for murder, hit-and-run causing death or injury, felony driving under the influence causing injury, and sexual assault. Employees who are family members of a "victim" also have rights to this type of leave.

Additionally, AB 406 will amend Government Code Section 12945.8 as of January 1, 2026, so that employees may take time off from work to attend judicial proceedings related to a crime, including, but not limited to, any delinquency proceeding, a postarrest release decision, plea, sentencing, postconviction release decision, or any proceeding where a right of that person is at issue.

Employees can also use Paid Sick Leave when serving on a jury or inquest, and AB 406 removes the requirement for advance notice to the employer. Employers are prohibited from discharging, discriminating against, or retaliating against employees who take this leave.

This law was an urgency statute, which means that it took effect immediately (on October 1, 2025) to preserve public peace, health, or safety. It was to ensure that the Labor Commissioner and Civil Rights Department implemented these changes effectively and also to provide clarity to employed victims of crimes of their rights. Employers are

obligated to provide notice of these rights to new hires and to all employees annually.

8. Independent Contractors and Employee Vehicle Business Expense

Senate Bill 809 expands the existing law that requires employers to reimburse employees for business expenses incurred when using their own vehicles for the construction industry and provides an amnesty program for the construction industry.⁸ First, the law offers amnesty to "eligible construction contractors" who misclassified employee drivers as independent contractors. The law authorizes a settlement between the company and the driver, under specific procedures.

Second, the law states that mere ownership of a vehicle, including a personal vehicle or a commercial vehicle, used by an individual in providing labor or services for a company, does not make that individual an independent contractor.

Third, this new law requires employers to indemnify employees for all expenses or losses incurred when they use their personal commercial vehicle while performing duties for the company. In other words, with respect to construction trucking, a commercial motor vehicle driver employee who owns the truck, tractor, or trailer used to perform their job duties may be entitled to reimbursement for the use, upkeep, and depreciation of their truck, tractor, or trailer.

9. Extended Statute of Limitations for Sexual Harassment/Assault Claims

Assembly Bill 250 extends the eligibility period and allows employees to bring certain sexual harassment or sexual assault claims against a company that would have otherwise been barred prior to January 1, 2026, because of the statute of limitations.⁹ To revive a claim against an entity, the employee must allege: (1) that they were sexually assaulted, (2) that one or more entities or persons are responsible for damages arising out of the sexual assault, and (3) that the entity or representatives engaged in a cover up or attempt to cover up previous instances or allegations of sexual assault by the alleged perpetrator. This new law will permit a cause of action to proceed if it is already pending in court or allow employees to commence an action between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2027.

Employers, all employees, and managers must undergo sexual harassment prevention training. Additionally, if an employee alleges that they are a victim of sexual harassment or assault in the workplace, take it seriously and immediately launch an investigation.

10. Expanded Personnel Record Requirements

Under Labor Code section 1198.5, employers are required to permit employees to inspect and receive a copy of personnel records maintained by the employer relating to the employee's performance or to any grievance concerning the employee upon request. SB 513 expands the definition of

⁷ SB531 (2025), amending Labor Code §§ 245-249.

⁸ AB 250 (2025), amends Cal. Code Civil Proc. § 340.16.

"personnel records" to include records about employee education and training. Specifically, employers must maintain the following information regarding employee education and training:

- Employee name;
- Training provider name;
- Duration and date of training;
- Core competencies covered, including skills in equipment or software; and
- Any resulting certification or qualification.

Conclusion

This article does not address all new California laws that impact employees or employers; rather, it briefly summarizes those believed to be the most significant in terms of scope and impact on individuals or employers with business operations in California. Employers should review their personnel policies, employee handbooks, and training to comply with the new laws.

Michelle M. Wolfe is a Partner at the Sloat Law Group, APC in Palm Desert. Her practice focuses on representing employers and management on labor and employment matters in litigation and in providing workplace solutions.



CALIFORNIA STATE BAR NOTICE

Read it, Declare it, Mean it: Attorneys Annual Civility Declaration

The California Supreme Court has amended rule 9.7 of the Rules of Court: All active licensees and special admissions attorneys—which, for purposes of rule 9.7, includes foreign legal consultants—are required to submit an annual declaration of adherence to the attorney oath.

- The attorney oath includes a commitment to act with dignity, courtesy, and integrity.
- This declaration will be required each year beginning with the upcoming 2026 renewal cycle.

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New Brown Act Requirements: Translation, Teleconferencing, and Hybrid Access

by Gregory Mikhanjian

Senate Bill 707 (SB 707), signed into law by Governor Newsom on October 3, 2025, makes major changes to how many public agencies in California will hold their meetings. The bill's goal is to increase public participation, improve access for diverse communities, and update the Brown Act for modern technological realities. Some of these changes apply only to "eligible legislative bodies," while others apply to all legislative bodies.

What Counts as an "Eligible Legislative Body"?

SB 707 defines the term as being any of the following: (1) city councils in cities with at least 30,000 people; (2) county boards of supervisors in counties with at least 30,000 people; (3) city councils in counties with at least 600,000 people; and (4) boards of large special districts (based on size, population, employees, or revenue). City of Riverside has a population of about 325,000 people, and Riverside County is home to about 2.5 million people, so the Eligible Legislative Body rules will apply broadly here.

Key Rules for Eligible Legislative Bodies

The following rules applying to these legislative bodies take effect starting July 1, 2026.

Required Hybrid (In-Person + Remote) Meetings. Meetings must allow the public to join through two-way phone or video, unless the technology is unavailable or the meeting is an exception (i.e., an off-site tour). If the remote system goes down, the meeting must pause for at least one hour to fix it. If the issue cannot be fixed by then, the body must take a roll-call vote confirming they tried in good faith and that continuing the meeting is more so in the public interest than further delays. Also, the legislative body or its presiding officer can now remove or limit participation from people who are being disruptive in a teleconferenced meeting.

Public Outreach Requirements. Eligible legislative bodies must offer a system to electronically request and receive agendas, maintain an accessible webpage explaining how to participate in meetings, and make efforts to involve people who do not usually attend meetings, like non-English-speaking media or civic groups (subject to the legislative body's broad discretion).

Translation and Interpretation. Eligible legislative bodies must translate agendas and participation instructions into any language spoken by 20% or more of the relevant population that speaks English less than "very well," according to the American Community Survey (ACS). Also, the new public meeting webpage must be translated into those same languages. Furthermore, the legislative body must provide a physical, public space reasonably near the physically posted agenda where anyone may post additional translations of the agenda. Lastly, people who bring their own interpreters must be reasonably assisted by providing, for example, extra time or physical space.

Rules Applying to All Legislative Bodies

These rules take effect January 1, 2026, and primarily give updates to teleconferencing rules. First, SB 707 expands the

Brown Act's existing teleconferencing provisions to include states of emergency declared by localities, as well as just cause allowances (i.e., health or family issues, military service, and other similar issues preventing in-person attendance). Subject to updated quorum rules, teleconferencing will continue to be available for neighborhood councils, student body community college associations, and student-run community college organizations.

Next, SB 707 allows attendance by a legislative body member via teleconferencing as a reasonable accommodation under applicable law, like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

SB 707 allows remote teleconference meetings by "eligible subsidiary bodies" of local agencies, meaning only advisory bodies that cannot take certain final actions and do not have primary jurisdiction on subjects like elections, budgets, and police oversight. Among other requirements, these bodies must have at least one physical location for the meeting.

SB 707 also allows remote teleconference meetings by "eligible multijurisdictional bodies," meaning a legislative body with representatives from more than one local agency, or a legislative body of a joint powers agency. Among other requirements, members participating remotely cannot receive compensation for attendance and are limited as to the frequency in which they can participate remotely.

Lastly, watching or listening to an online meeting without being able to speak, discuss, or deliberate on matters does not count as "teleconferencing."

Other General Changes Effective January 1, 2026

Agencies must now give a copy of the Brown Act to any newly elected or appointed member. All legislative bodies must follow the same posting and notice requirements for special or emergency meetings. The rule banning a majority of legislative body members from using social media to discuss legislative body business now continues indefinitely.

Existing law requires a district attorney or interested person to send a cease-and-desist letter within nine months before challenging a legislative body's past, alleged Brown Act violation. SB 707 extends that deadline to twelve months.

Finally, some parts of SB 707 expire on January 1, 2030, unless extended by the Legislature.

Overall, SB 707 codifies policies that many legislative bodies had already put into practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, it provides these bodies with clear guidance on ensuring the Brown Act's public access purpose works with modern technological developments. So, legislative bodies should find their ability to communicate clearly with the public improves after implementing these new changes.

Gregory Mikhanjian is an associate (pending CA Bar number) at Best Best & Krieger LLP. This article is adapted from a BBK Legal Alert dated October 10, 2025.



SB 827 Expands Training Obligations for Local Agency Officials

by Josh Avalos

Senate Bill 827 is set to bring about new and expanded training requirements for local agencies and their officials in 2026. The Bill was introduced to “encourage responsible governing and prevent fiscal mismanagement” within local agencies.¹ To this end, SB 827 mandates new fiscal and financial training for select local agency officials. SB 827 also makes several important updates to existing ethics training requirements. Ultimately, SB 827 will create new and potentially costly administrative burdens for local agencies throughout the state. This raises the question: Will the benefits outweigh the costs?

New Fiscal and Financial Training Requirements

Under SB 827, certain local agency officials will now be required to complete at least two hours of fiscal and financial training once every two years.² The Bill outlines who must complete fiscal and financial training, what the training must cover, when the training must be completed, and how the training must be delivered and its requirements satisfied.

Who Must Complete the Training?

SB 827 applies only to local agencies that provide compensation to their legislative body members. Within those agencies, only the following officials must complete fiscal and financial training: (1) legislative body members and elected officers; (2) appointed officials who make decisions regarding finances and the use of public resources; (3) local agency executives, such as CEOs and department heads, and other administrative officers in similar roles; and (4) employees designated to receive fiscal and financial training.³ Officials already subject to existing fiscal and financial training requirements—such as county auditors, treasurers, and tax collectors—are exempt from the new training requirement.⁴

What Must the Training Cover?

SB 827 does not spell out in exact detail what needs to be covered in a fiscal and financial training. It does, however, require that the training cover the following three general topics:⁵

1. Laws and principles relating to financial administration and fiscal management, including financial administrative roles, financial policies, municipal budgets and budget processes, and financial reporting and auditing;

2. Laws and principles relating to capital financing, debt management, local agency revenue mechanisms, pensions and other postemployment benefits, cash management and investments, the prudent investor standard, and the ethics of safeguarding public resources; and
3. General fiscal and financial planning principles and any other laws relevant to the local agency official's public service, oversight duties, and procurement and contracting practices and responsibilities.

The general nature of these topics leaves a training provider with some discretion to decide specifically what to cover. However, SB 827 grew out of the Legislature's concern that many local officials are underprepared to take on their “expansive fiscal, budgetary, and financial responsibilities.”⁶ So, in deciding which specific topics to cover, a training provider should, to some extent, tailor its course material to the fiscal and financial responsibilities belonging to a particular agency. This will help to ensure that the training provided is adequate to satisfy SB 827's requirements.

When Must the Training Be Completed?

The timeline for when an official must complete their first two hours of fiscal and financial training depends on an official's commencement date. Officials commencing service prior to January 1, 2026, must complete their initial training *before* January 1, 2028 (unless their term ends before January 9, 2028).⁷ Officials commencing service on or after January 1, 2026, must complete their initial training within six months of their start date.⁸ Local agency officials must then complete another two hours of fiscal and financial training within two years of their prior training deadline.⁹ The following examples help to illustrate these requirements:

- Example 1: Official A commences service on December 1, 2025. Official A will have to complete their first two hours of fiscal and financial training by December 31, 2027, their second training by December 31, 2029, and so forth.
- Example 2: Official B commences service on January 2, 2026. Official B will have to complete their first two hours of fiscal and financial training by July 2, 2026 (six months from Official B's first day of service).

¹ Sen. Rules Com., Off. of Sen Floor Analyses, Analysis of Sen. Bill No. 827 (2025-2026 Reg. Sess.) as amended Sep. 2, 2025, p. 5.

² Sen. Bill No. 827 (2025-2026 Reg. Sess.) § 4.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Sen. Com. on Local Gov., Analysis of Sen. Bill No. 827 (2025-2026 Reg. Sess.), p. 3.

⁷ Sen. Bill No. 827 (2025-2026 Reg. Sess.) § 4.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

vice). Official B will then have to complete another two hours of training by July 2, 2028, and so forth.

How Must the Training Be Delivered and the Requirements Satisfied?

The fiscal and financial training must be delivered through either a "training course" or "sets of self-study materials that include tests."¹⁰ A local agency may develop its own training course or study materials.¹¹ Alternatively, a local agency may contract with a third party provider to deliver the required training to its officials.¹² However, the training course or self-study materials must "be developed in consultation with widely recognized experts in local government finance, including local government associations."¹³

The training itself may be completed at home, in-person, or online.¹⁴ Once completed, the training provider must provide participants with proof of participation.¹⁵ The participants must then provide a copy of their proof of participation to all local agencies that they serve, in order to satisfy their fiscal and financial training requirements.¹⁶

SB 827 also imposes upon local agencies, as a whole, administrative and procedural obligations. On an annual basis, local agencies must provide their officials with information on the fiscal and financial training available to satisfy their requirements.¹⁷ Local agencies must also maintain, for five years, records indicating the date that a given official completed its fiscal and financial training and the name of the entity that provided the training.¹⁸ And, the agency must post to its website (if it has one) clear instructions on how to request these records, including the contact information needed to facilitate a records request.¹⁹

Updates to Existing Ethics Training Requirements

In addition to its new fiscal and financial training requirements, SB 827 makes three important updates to existing ethics training requirements.

First, SB 827 adds a new group of local agency officials to the list of those required to complete ethics training—"department head[s] or other similar administrative officer[s] of a local agency."²⁰

Second, SB 827 shortens the timeline under which local agency officials must complete their first ethics training.²¹ Previously, officials had one year to complete their first ethics training. Now, under SB 827, officials commencing service on or after January 1, 2026, must complete their first

ethics training "no later than six months from their first day of service."²²

Third, SB 827 adds the requirement that, starting on July 1, 2026, local agencies post on their website clear instructions and contact information for the purpose of requesting the officials' ethics training records.²³

Do the Benefits of SB 827's Training Requirements Outweigh the Costs?

SB 827's fiscal and financial training obligations introduce new, and potentially costly, administrative burdens for local agencies and their officials. These requirements are projected to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on a statewide basis, and although some expenses may be reimbursable from the State General Fund, the mandate will still require a significant investment of time from affected officials. To fairly assess whether these burdens are warranted, it is important to first understand why the state legislature enacted the Bill.

SB 827 was introduced in response to growing concerns among state lawmakers that existing ethics training requirements are inadequate to prevent the misuse and misappropriation of public funds. These concerns appear to stem from several "repeated" incidents in recent years involving local officials engaged in criminal conduct with public funds. For example, the Senate Rules Committee's analysis noted a February 2025 incident in which multiple Hunting Park City Council members had their homes searched for allegedly misusing \$24 million in public funds, as well as a separate case in which an Orange County Supervisor pled guilty to federal bribery charges after receiving more than \$550,000 in funds that had been allocated to feed elderly constituents.

Protecting public funds is an unquestionably important goal, but it remains fair to question whether two hours of fiscal and financial training is an effective means to achieve that goal. Those intent on abusing public resources for personal gain are unlikely to be deterred simply by taking a class outlining their responsibilities. At the same time, SB 827 may promote a broader culture of fiscal awareness within local agencies, making it easier for the overwhelming majority of law-abiding officials to identify and prevent improper conduct. In this way, even if the training does not dissuade deliberate criminal behavior, it may still enhance overall fiscal vigilance.

Ultimately, SB 827's real impact will hinge on whether these training requirements meaningfully improve local financial oversight. As agencies begin implementing the new mandate, the coming years will show whether the anticipated benefits outweigh the administrative and financial costs.

Josh Avalos is a law clerk with Best, Best & Krieger LLP, where he focuses on special district and municipal litigation.



¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ See *id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *id.*

¹⁴ See *id.*; Sen. Rules Com., Off. of Sen. Floor Analyses, Analysis of Sen. Bill No. 827 (2025-2026 Reg. Sess.) as amended Sep. 2, 2025, p. 5.

¹⁵ Sen. Bill No. 827 (2025-2026 Reg. Sess.) § 4.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.* at § 1.

²¹ Gov. Code, § 53235.1, subd. (a).

²² Sen. Bill No. 827 (2025-2026 Reg. Sess.) § 1.

²³ *Id.*



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Key Probate Law and Related Policy Changes Effective January 1, 2026

by Nesa Targhibi

As 2026 approaches, several statutory and regulatory changes will impact probate practice in California. Amendments to Probate Code section 9202 introduce new notice requirements, Medi-Cal eligibility rules are shifting with the reinstatement of the asset test, and federal estate tax exemptions will increase under new federal legislation. The following provides an overview of developments applicable in the year ahead.

I. Amendments to Probate Code Section 9202

Assembly Bill 1521 modifies Probate Code section 9202 by expanding notice obligations owed by personal representatives and estate counsel. These changes apply to estates in which letters are first issued on or after January 1, 2026.

A. Electronic Notice to the Department of Health Care Services

The statute now expressly allows notice to the Director of the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to be submitted electronically through the department's website. Traditional mailing procedures remain available.

B. New Notice Requirement to the Department of Child Support Services

A new subdivision, Probate Code section 9202(e), establishes a mandatory notice requirement for estates in which the decedent may have had child support obligations.

Under Probate Code section 9202(e)(1), within 90 days after letters are issued, the personal representative or estate counsel must provide notice of the decedent's death to the Director of the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) if the representative or attorney knows, or has reason to believe, that the decedent had an outstanding child support obligation under a valid court order. Notice may be provided by mail under Probate Code section 1215 or electronically through the DCSS website.

Once DCSS receives notice, the local child support agency has four months to assert a creditor's claim against the estate under Probate Code section 9202(e)(2), similar to other creditor claims.

II. Medi-Cal Eligibility Changes: Asset Test Reinstated

California will reinstate the Medi-Cal asset test for many non-MAGI programs, including long-term-care and aged/disabled categories, effective January 1, 2026.

Non-MAGI programs refer to Medi-Cal eligibility categories that do not use the Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) methodology. They generally include long-term-care, aged, blind, or disabled beneficiaries, in contrast to programs for children, pregnant individuals, or parents where MAGI rules apply. This represents a shift from the recent period during which asset limits rules were removed.

Beginning in 2026, Medi-Cal will again evaluate an individual's assets when determining eligibility. The reinstated thresholds are \$130,000 for an individual and \$195,000 for a married couple. Additional allowances may be available for larger households.

Transfers for less than fair market value will once again trigger penalty periods for long-term-care eligibility determinations.

Trust structures, such as irrevocable trusts or Medi-Cal asset protection trusts, may require review to ensure they comply with Medi-Cal's definitions and requirements after 2026. California's estate-recovery rules remain unchanged, and assets held in living trusts, joint tenancy, or via transfer-on-death instruments continue to avoid Medi-Cal recovery.

III. Federal Estate Tax Changes: Increased Exemptions Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA)

Federal legislation has modified the federal estate and gift tax system. Effective January 1, 2026, the federal estate and gift tax exemption increases to \$15 million per individual and \$30 million per married couple, with no sunset provision. Beginning in 2027, the exemptions will be indexed for inflation. The generation-skipping transfer (GST) tax exemption also increases to \$15 million.

The ability to transfer unused exemption to a surviving spouse (portability) remains available. However, an estate tax return must still be filed to elect portability, even for estates below the filing threshold.

The top federal estate tax rate remains at 40 percent for amounts exceeding the applicable exemption.

Nesa Targhibi is a sole practitioner and owner of Holborn Law APC based in Riverside and San Bernardino County, and practices in the area of trust and probate..



The State of the Riverside County Superior Court

by Presiding Judge Jacqueline Jackson

Happy New Year to everyone! As we welcome 2026, the State of the Riverside County Superior Court continues to evolve, and I am pleased to share several important updates with you.

We are excited to welcome Kelli Beltran as our new Chief Operations Officer and Kareem Gongora as our new Director of Communications and Public Information. We look forward to their leadership and fresh perspective as the court grows. Deputy Executive Officer Maury Benemie will be moving positions to head our family law, juvenile, and family court services and newly hired Deputy Executive Officer Cynthia Mikes will assume responsibility for criminal, traffic, jury, and interpreter services.

We had several new judges appointed in the summer and fall of 2025. Judge Amy Nett and Judge Gareit Newstrom sit on the family law bench. Judge Sylwia Luttrell is assigned to a criminal law vertical calendar department. Judge Jonathan Mendoza is assigned to criminal trials. Commissioner Jennifer Amato was hired at the end of 2025. She is assigned to our Indio Courthouse.

Last summer, we completed our Strategic Plan for the years 2025-2029. The full plan is available on the court's website. This plan is our foundation for guiding priorities, and we are placing energy into ensuring focus and alignment across the court to implement our core values. Our core values are accessibility, accountability, collaboration, diversity/equity, efficiency, innovation and agility, and timeliness. As stated in the plan, "we stand at a critical juncture, balancing growing service demands, workforce transitions, and financial constraints while fulfilling our commitment to provide access to justice." We stand committed to continual improvement.

In January 2025, the transition to the eCourt case management system was completed. As it goes with most transitions, operational challenges arose. Court administration and IT teams began to immediately tackle the issues and continue to actively work on long-term resolutions. No large organization can function in today's legal world without embracing and utilizing technology. We continue to upgrade and shape our technological resources in an effort to enhance court and case efficiency and improve user experience.

As you know, in 2024, the Menifee Courthouse was opened. In 2025, it won a Construction Management Association of America award for Federal/State/Local projects over \$50 million. It is very busy and continues to hear family and general civil matters alongside a full community court calendar.

Many in the legal community will recall that in 2011, another courthouse was approved by the Judicial Council for construction, the Indio Juvenile and Family Courthouse. The

former Indio Juvenile Courthouse was built in 1955. In modern times, the structure poorly served families in the desert region. It was deemed unsafe, much too small, overcrowded, and abundant in critical security concerns. In early 2020, the old Indio juvenile building was demolished and all juvenile cases moved into the Larson Justice Center. Obviously, that filled the courtrooms at that court location. Not surprisingly, the Larson Justice Center continues to operate at full capacity. There is only one spare courtroom, and an assigned judge has heard criminal matters in that courtroom since 2020. Even so, the majority of the Larson Justice Center workload has been consistently dedicated to criminal hearings and trials. The Judicial Council manages construction on the new building. Construction has been underway for numerous years and is still pending completion.

Countywide, more than half of all Court resources remain devoted to criminal matters including military diversion, veteran's court, H.O.M.E. court, drug court, traffic, and criminally involved mental health cases. The court's remaining resources are distributed among all other case types and hearings including, general civil, limited civil, family, probate, juvenile, unlawful detainees, habeas, CARE court matters, and the appellate division. Every case type matters. Access to justice extends across all areas of the court's work. We appreciate the legal community understanding that no one case type is any more valuable than another and that we allocate our resources thoughtfully to maintain smooth operations and fairness.

We accomplish a remarkable amount of work with the resources that we have. We remain twenty-two judges short of our need based on being the fourth most populated county in the state. Our Legislature has not demonstrated an appetite to fully correct this judicial officer short fall. And so, the court equitably allocates available resources using real-time analytics provided by the court's analytics and decision support services team, which has proven critical to the smooth operation and fair distribution of our resources. Keeping the resources of this court balanced requires hard work and broad vision. We carry those attributes into this new year and will continue to apply them across all court functions.

Looking ahead, we are in the process of hiring a hearing officer and also anticipate appointing another court commissioner in the spring of 2026. More judicial vacancies are expected later this year. With this being the governor's final year in office, applicants are encouraged to submit their judicial applications promptly. The court's judicial applicant mentor program is happy to help. Program information can be found on the court's website.

There are additional employment opportunities with the court. For those looking to work in the judicial branch, we are currently hiring courtroom assistants, business systems

analysts, court reporters, and court interpreters. If you know someone who may be interested, please refer them to the court's website.

This court is incredibly busy. Be that as it may, we remain deeply committed to civic engagement. It is important to allow and encourage community participation in the justice system – the third branch of government. Many bench officers actively participate in the Inns of Court. We continue to host Youth Court, Mock Trial, and Behind the Bench programs after court hours or on the weekends. We also support the Chief Justice's Power of Democracy initiative in classrooms and partner with the Riverside County

Bar Association's New Attorney Academy along with other community programs across the county.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the members of the bar and our justice partners for their dedication, collaboration, and shared commitment to fair and accessible justice. We look forward to a successful 2026 and to continuing our joint efforts to uphold justice, fairness, and service to our community.

Hon. Jacqueline Jackson is the Presiding Judge of the Riverside Superior Court of California, County of Riverside.



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Lyman Evans

RCBA Past President 1915-1916

by Bruce E. Todd

The newspaper's obituary celebrated him as one of Riverside's "pioneer" attorneys. In fact, he was born the same year as Thomas Edison. That was also the year that the first rescuers reached the forlorn Donner Party snowbound in the daunting Sierra Nevada mountains.

His name was Lyman Evans and he eventually came to Riverside from DeWitt, Iowa where he was born to Charles and Almina (Ferguson) Evans on September 1, 1847. Prior to relocating to California, he was graduated from Iowa State University and then he was eventually admitted to the Iowa bar in 1870. He later became a member of the Iowa legislature from 1882-83.

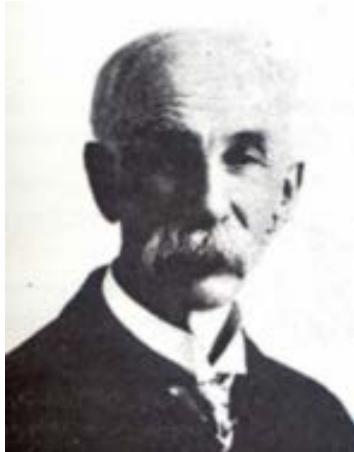
After practicing law in Iowa, Evans, perhaps seeking more temperate winter climes, relocated to San Bernardino. He was admitted to the California bar in 1889 and assigned bar number 2724. He became a deputy district attorney in San Bernardino and worked there until 1893. It was that year that Riverside County was formed.

A *Riverside Enterprise* article dated May 16, 1893 announced that Evans, who had been working as district attorney for San Bernardino County until the previous Saturday, had resigned and would be moving to Riverside. The article reported that, now that Riverside County has been established, Evans "recognizes the prestige of residing in this county."

His former boss, District Attorney Frank Oster, who was evidently sad to lose Evans from his San Bernardino staff, described Evans as "one of the best prosecuting attorneys I ever knew. I've never known Mr. Evans to make a mistake in court, counsel or conduct."

After moving to Riverside, Evans joined William Collier in a legal practice (Collier later became the Riverside County Bar Association's second president). In an article dated August 25, 1898, the *Riverside Enterprise* reported that Evans was a candidate for nomination as the District Attorney for Riverside County. The voters ultimately chose Evans for the District Attorney position and he served in that capacity for over 20 years.

One of the most significant victories which he secured for the city, however, was not in the legal field. As heralded in the *Riverside Enterprise* dated September 11, 1901, Evans was instrumental in convincing legendary industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie to donate \$20,000 for the



Lyman Evans

construction of a public library in Riverside. The library was eventually constructed at the intersection of Orange and Main (the current site of The Cheech).

Many of the legal cases which were handled by Evans garnered newspaper headlines throughout his tenure as District Attorney. The August 7, 1901 edition of the *Riverside Enterprise* reported on a matter in which Evans chose not to prosecute an unidentified woman who shot and killed her husband Frank Wellihan. The article noted that Wellihan had previously threatened to kill her and her parents if she would not marry him. She was only 13 years old at the time. The shooting took place four years later when

she was 17 years old. In the article, Evans described her as a "gallant woman who has rid the county of such a desperado."

After he was previously elected as Riverside's District Attorney in 1898, the *Riverside Enterprise* noted in its July 12, 1902 edition that Evans, described as a staunch Republican, will be seeking his second term of office (he ultimately was reelected).

Another of his cases made the news on March 29, 1906 when the *Riverside Enterprise* reported that a "Mrs. Bernasconi," described as a "well known violator of the anti-liquor law," was successfully prosecuted by Evans for selling two bottles of beer for 50 cents each to a boy identified as Chester Cutler. Bernasconi was the proprietress of the Southern Hotel in Perris. She had previously been fined \$100 in a similar matter and the article opined that she would likely receive a more significant fine and possible jail time at the time of her upcoming sentencing for selling the brew to Cutler.

The following year the *Riverside Enterprise* reported on another matter involving Evans when its May 10, 1907 edition noted that he had informed Ed Williams and Harry Miller that they would be fined \$1,000 each if they participated in a prize fight which had been booked the upcoming Saturday night at the opera house. Evans noted that, while the city did not have any law covering the activity, the state had one in place.

Publicity came to Evans again for his heroic activity which was performed in downtown Riverside. As reported in the *Riverside Enterprise* dated October 28, 1909, an unidentified woman who was riding in a horse and buggy became the victim of a near tragedy when she lost control of the "infuriated horse." She was described as hanging over the side of

the buggy as the horse stampeded for more than two blocks. Evans, who was a witness to the event, was successful in bringing the horse to a stop at the corner of Eleventh and Lemon streets.

Although it was presumably not related to the stress of his heroic activity in saving the woman, Evans made the news again on February 4, 1910 when the *Riverside Enterprise* reported that he was taken seriously ill while working in his office and was transported to his home (454 14th St.). It was determined that he was suffering from severe intestinal trouble which was apparently similar to an attack which had incapacitated him some years earlier.

Even though he was known as a very successful prosecutor, Evans was also respected in legal circles for knowing when to punt his cases. One of those was described in the *Riverside Daily Press* dated June 20, 1914 when he ordered the release of a murder suspect after a trial because he opined that "no jury would convict him." The article reported that S. Marcias, the defendant, was in a battle over a "black-eyed Mexican woman" with murder victim Francisco Carisco. Trial testimony revealed that Carisco went hunting for Marcias with a large knife after the woman left Carisco for Marcias. In order to protect himself from the "murderous assault," Marcias shot Carisco who died instantly. A jury deliberated in an all-night session and could not agree upon a verdict.

The following year, the local newspaper published several items about Evans that it considered quite newsworthy. The first of those resulted in the beginning of an important chapter in Riverside legal history. The January 4, 1915 edition of the *Riverside Enterprise* announced that Evans had hired H. L. Thompson, described as "a young attorney of considerable promise," as a deputy district attorney in his office. Thompson later left the district attorney's office to join the law firm which eventually became Thompson & Colegate (which recently celebrated its 110th anniversary). Thompson also later became the seventh RCBA president in 1924.

On March 18, 1915, the *Riverside Enterprise* reported on an interesting matter involving Evans who had received a letter from a man from San Diego asking him to provide assistance in winning back his wife. The correspondence from the man stated that he had left his wife in obedience "to the call for madder music and redder wine." The letter further said that he now "obsessed his soul and yearned for home and the true love he had deserted (for the past two years.)" The man claimed that he did not return to her because he had been in jail under an assumed name. His wife, who was now living in Los Angeles, said that she "might" consider taking him back if he could prove that he was incarcerated the entire time. In his letter, the man wanted Evans to support his contention that he had been in jail (which, apparently, he had not). The article reported that Evans decided to turn the matter over to new deputy DA Thompson. Evans refused to identify the man and woman in case the publicity might prevent a possible happy reunion.

In a precursor to California's current border issues, the *Riverside Enterprise* dated October 15, 1915 reported that Evans had been called before the County Board of Supervisors to provide his opinion about whether "tramps (hobos)" could legally be kept out of the county. Evans opined to the board that, unless a crime had been committed, there was no legal method to arrest a tramp for simply entering the county. Interestingly, he also responded to the board that a significant amount of the crime committed in the county was committed by well-heeled persons rather than tramps. He said that "the numerous forgeries, burglaries and larcenies are generally found to be committed by men and women of supposed higher class; in fact, are persons who dress well and travel in Pullmans."

In 1916, Evans was elected as the third president of the Riverside County Bar Association. Later that year, he charged Peter Van Dane of Belgium with the murder of Carl Knauff of Germany. According to the *Riverside Enterprise* dated October 24, 1916, both of these individuals were neighboring ranchers in Corona. The evidence at a coroner's jury revealed that Van Dane went to the Knauff property to borrow a chain while Knauff and his wife were loading beets into a wagon. Mrs. Knauff went into the house to cook dinner. She came out of the house to discover her husband and Van Dane running around the wagon. Knauff was carrying a pitchfork and Van Dane was armed with a gun. She tried to run between them to break it up but Van Dane shot her husband before she could do so. She reported that Van Dane had a habit for borrowing items and not returning them so she suspected that her husband had refused to loan him the chain. She said that her husband died at her feet. The article reported that Evans opined that, previously, they had both been hard working and peaceful men.

With World War I in progress, Evans became a member of the Riverside County Council of Defense. This organization was formed in compliance with state law which required counties to form councils to, among other things, enforce laws regarding the conduct of aliens and for the production of more agriculture. The *Riverside Enterprise* stated in its April 21, 1917 edition that "a close watch is being kept for persons unfriendly to the United States."

In May of 1918, Evans was elected as vice-president of the California District Attorneys Association. This was also the year that he was part of a group declaring that teachers should be paid for every day that they are prevented from working due to the raging influenza epidemic. Evans and other county officials in the group opined that "teachers are ready and willing to work and are prevented from keeping school through no fault of their own."

WW I troop movement also became an issue for Evans in his capacity as district attorney. As reported in the July 29, 1918 edition of the *Riverside Daily Press*, Joseph Coleman, described as a 16 year-old Indian boy who was a former student at Sherman Indian School, was arrested for trying to derail a train at Prado a few miles west of Corona. The train

was carrying over 1,000 soldiers who were being transported to Camp Kearny. Apparently, Coleman's first attempt to derail the train was unsuccessful and so he attempted to derail a second train. He was observed by a track walker and placed under arrest. When he was later interrogated by Evans, the boy acknowledged that he knew that they were troop trains and "had an idea that someone would be killed." It was decided to relocate Coleman from Sherman to the city of Lone since the latter would be "safest for a boy of his character."

By 1919, Evans was being requested by many citizens to run for Riverside's mayor and he decided to enter the race. He also was elected that year as president of the California District Attorneys Association and was described in the press as "one of California's most able prosecutors." Later that year, the *Riverside Daily Press* reported on November 19, 1919 that Evans had lost the mayoral election to Dr. Horace Porter, a minister, who was known as the "anti-kissing in public candidate and a supporter of Blue laws."

Speaking of Blue laws, Evans himself, as described in many newspaper articles, was a long-time opponent of liquor in the county. In an article dated January, 4, 1919, the *Riverside Enterprise* reported that, in his final action as District Attorney, Evans testified in a criminal case and denounced the liquor traffic in Riverside County. Besides his opposition to liquor, he was also an opponent of gambling. In an earlier article dated March 30, 1917 in the *Riverside Enterprise*, it was noted that a pool room operator had been convicted of allowing gambling at his establishment. Evans was quoted as pronouncing that "I'm going to see that a stop

is put to it and, whenever an arrest is made, I shall endeavor to have the full penalty of the law invoked against the offender."

The year 1919 was also when Evans chose to retire as the District Attorney. Thereafter, his name would periodically appear in local newspaper articles. For example, the December 13, 1922 edition of the *Riverside Enterprise* reported that the Riverside County Bar Association honored Evans and his wife Mary for 50 years of marriage.

Evans' fame as a pioneer attorney and revered prosecutor spread beyond Riverside County. His passing from heart disease on October 6, 1932 was reported by many news sources including the *San Pedro News Pilot* in an article the following day. The article announced that "funeral services were held today for Lyman Evans, 83, one the oldest practicing attorneys in the state."

His wife Mary Nancy (Wallace) pre-deceased him in 1926. He was survived by his daughter Helen, a school librarian in San Jose, and his son Wallace, a San Francisco businessman.

Besides his successful legal career, Evans was a member of the Riverside Elks Lodge, the Iowa Society of Riverside and the Calvary Presbyterian Church.

His remains are located at Riverside's historic Evergreen Memorial Park & Mausoleum (Plot C-2-E).

Bruce Todd is a member of the RCBA History Committee, a former member of the RCBA Publications Committee, and is now happily enjoying the life of retirement.



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Chief Justice Offering Tours of Riverside Appellate Courthouse

by Aidan McGloin

If you are interested in architecture, construction, civics, local history, government planning or the law, I recommend you reach out to Presiding Justice Manuel Ramirez.

Ramirez has been offering tours of the courthouse he designed and presides in for decades. I went on such a tour on December 1, and the justice and I took up more of each other's time, three hours, than we should have.

First, to lay the groundwork for my lay readers: the Fourth District Court of Appeal, Division Two, hears appeals on cases from the superior courts of San Bernardino, Riverside and Inyo counties. Prior to 1999, the court rented a former bank building in downtown San Bernardino. The courtroom, being a bank, was filled with large pillars which obstructed the view of the justices. As Ramirez showed me, spectators would lean to the left, lean to the right, and split in the middle depending on which justice was speaking.

Ramirez, who has been Chief Justice since 1990, was given a \$7.5 million budget (\$15 million in today's money). The first accomplishment: they finished under budget (\$6.8 million spent). Their second accomplishment: they finished ahead of schedule. A third accomplishment: the place is beautiful. Those old jokes that you can get jobs done either cheap, fast or good quality; or that the government can't ever give you any of those qualities, are disproven. Ramirez does a good job explaining how they cut the cost down: don't fight with the architects, cut out unnecessary expenditures. Above all, he continued giving gratitude to the laborers, carpenters and construction workers who gave discounts on their work because of their pride in working on such a project.

I am ashamed to say that my tour was the first time I visited the courthouse. To cut down on travel time, I always watched oral arguments through the YouTube webcast. Opinions are posted online, and I rarely need to read opening briefs or other internal documents. I, also, had in my mind that the courthouse was as far away as the federal appellate courthouse, which resides in Pomona. So, I was wrong twice over. As San Bernardino Superior Judge Wilfred Schneider said at a recent industry dinner, showing up, in person, shows that you care.

I've rambled enough to set the scene. Time to talk about what the courthouse actually is.

An Art Exhibit

I did not think that the courthouse was also going to be an open art exhibit. The building has posted historic photos of courthouses, paintings from Manzanar internment camp survivors and paintings on loan from the Jonathan Art Foundation. The Jonathan Art Foundation's paintings were provided with the requirement that the courthouse be open to

the public. So, your visit is not only desired, but also required for the continuation of the court's interior decorations.

The Manzanar paintings were provided on loan after the court held a recreation of argument for the Japanese internment case, *Korematsu v. United States*.

One such painting, which Ramirez pointed out to me, was drawn by a man who was a child while he was held at the Manzanar internment camp. The colors were brighter than one would expect, and it appeared to be more of a playground than a camp, but, as Ramirez said, that was how the man remembered it: internment through a child's eyes.

The court also commissioned artwork: in the foyer is a drawing representing the plaintiff in the school desegregation case *Mendez v. Westminster*, which the court also re-created.

A Civics Education

Throughout the courthouse are weighty reminders of our nation's history. Plaques in front of the court's upper rooms remind us of the words of key people in American history, such as a line from President Thomas Jefferson's inaugural address: Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle.

You don't have to take Ramirez's tour, however, to learn the lessons this courthouse gives. Posted in the lobby, on days without oral argument, are accounts written by Stanley Mosk, former associate justice of the California Supreme Court and former attorney general for our state.

Mosk wrote an account of American history called *Democracy in America—Day by Day*. It includes a history lesson for every day of the year. You can read it online, or by going into the courthouse on days without oral argument. Ramirez scanned his copy and puts the xeroxed scans in the court's calendar docket.

On the day of my tour, the excerpt from November 26 was still up:

When quoting from the federalist papers, everyone has his favorite, like biblical psalms and Shakespeare sonnets. Mine is Madison number XLIV in which he discusses "Supposed Dangers of State Governments from the Powers of the Union. In it are these significant paragraphs:

The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the state governments are numerous and indefinite. The former will be exercised principally on external objects, as war, peace, negotiations, and foreign commerce with which last the power of taxation will, for the most

part, be connected. The powers reserved to the several States will extend to all the objects which, in the ordinary course of affairs, concern the lives, liberties, and properties of the people and the internal order, improvement and prosperity of the State.

The operations of the federal government will bear the most extensive and important in times of war and danger; those of the State governments, in times of peace and security. As the former period will probably bear a small proportion to the latter, the State governments will here enjoy another advantage over the federal government.

A Courthouse

Well, I had to get to the functionality of the courthouse eventually. The building was unique in that it was designed to be a courthouse. What does an appellate courthouse need? According to Ramirez, at least before online case lookup existed: conference rooms, law libraries and offices. The court set up conference rooms to encourage resolution of cases before oral arguments are needed, and breakout rooms, with remote appearance capability, so that lawyers can talk with their clients no matter their location.

As far as the courtroom itself: Ramirez designed it to calm attorneys' nerves. They won't give their best argument when stressed, he figured.

So, to the left of the courtroom, through French doors, is a courtyard with a gurgling fountain. The courtroom floor is

green, a color which instinctively calms a person. The lights are diffused. The walls are sound-absorbing. The freeway's roar cannot be heard.

Two projectors, set up on opposite corners of the room, project lawyers arguing remotely onto the white walls. This way, both the audience and the justices can naturally see the litigant without twisting around.

And, yes, there are no columns blocking anyone's view. Constructing the courtroom without columns was an engineering feat by itself, Ramirez said.

An Architectural Interest

Beyond the function, the story of its creation, and the lessons, the courthouse is architecturally interesting.

The lobby floor contains extinct fossils. The metal pergola in the front evokes the downtown Riverside train station. The wood elements are made of Honduran mahogany. The office doors include wired glass, invoking downtown Los Angeles' civic offices. Ramirez can lead you through the distinctions between the square and round columns as far as classical interpretation goes, the exterior window design, and the cutting of the floor tiles.

Ramirez said that anyone interested in taking a tour should reach out to him at his work email: Manuel.Ramirez@jud.ca.gov. He does tours for school groups as well.

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



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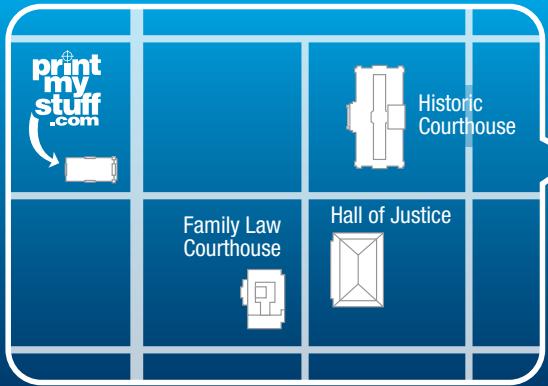
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Conference rooms, small offices and the Gabbert Gallery meeting room at the RCBA building are available for rent on a half-day or full-day basis. Please call for pricing information, and reserve rooms in advance, by contacting Charlene or Lisa at the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



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

Aristotle McDaniel (A) – eTop Technology, Redlands
Mariela E. Murillo – CA Agricultural Labor Relations Board, Indio
Sandra L. Pultz – Ferrone Law Group, Corona
Tyler A. Van Wagenen – Law Student, Riverside

(A) – Designates Affiliate Member



* ATTENTION RCBA MEMBERS *

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Some members have told us they prefer reading the online version of the *Riverside Lawyer* (at www.riversidecountybar.com) and no longer wish to receive a hard copy in the mail.

OPT-OUT: If you would prefer not to receive hard copies of future magazines, please let our office know by telephone (951-682-1015) or email (rcba@riversidecountybar.com).



Look Who's Joined Us!



HON. DOUGLAS W. STERN (RET.)

Judge Douglas Stern served on the Los Angeles County Superior Court from 2013 until his retirement in 2025. His assignments included an Independent Calendar unlimited-jurisdiction civil courtroom in the Stanley Mosk Courthouse, an Independent Calendar assignment in the Torrance Courthouse, and a civil trial courtroom handling personal injury and unlawful detainer matters.

Before joining the bench, Judge Stern spent 35 years as a civil litigator in state and federal courts, handling complex pre-trial, trial, and appellate matters across antitrust, real property, commercial disputes, corporate litigation, tort and product liability, and insurance litigation. He has conducted and participated in numerous settlement discussions, mediations, and complex pre-trial negotiations throughout his career.

PRACTICE AREAS:

Civil litigation, including: Business and commercial disputes, Real property and title matters, Contract disputes, Antitrust and unfair competition, Partnership, corporate, and fiduciary disputes, Product liability and tort claims, Insurance and bad-faith litigation, and Class actions.

CALENDAR

JANUARY

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

13 Landlord/Tenant Section Meeting
Joint with the San Bernardino County Bar Assn.
6:00 PM
Napoli Italian Restaurant, Loma Linda

19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

20 Family Law Section Meeting
Noon, RCBA Gabbert Gallery

21 Estate Planning, Probate & Elder Law
Section Meeting
Noon, RCBA Gabbert Gallery

22 Mock Trial – Round 1 – Regionals
5:30 PM
Riverside Hall of Justice, Southwest Justice Center,
Larson Justice Center

23 General Membership Meeting
Noon, RCBA Gabbert Gallery

27 Mock Trial – Round 2
5:30 PM
Riverside Hall of Justice

30 MCLE Marathon
Zoom
10:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Events Subject To Change

For the latest calendar information please visit the RCBA's website at riversidecountybar.com

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.

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.



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