

VOLUME 76 | NUMBER 7

JULY/AUG  
2026

# RIVERSIDE LAWYER

250<sup>TH</sup>  
— ★ YEAR ★ —  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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Renewing the Promise of Equal Justice  
in the Inland Empire

The Supreme Court and American Democracy

Capturing George Washington:

The Gilbert Stuart Portraits

The Fourth of July, Bankruptcy and the IEBF

Gideon's Promise in Riverside County

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.  
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America



1776 ★ 2026

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# PRESIDENT'S Message

by Megan G. Demshki



## A Heart Filled With Gratitude

As I write my final column for the *Riverside Lawyer* magazine as president of the Board of Directors, I am left with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. The RCBA is the organization that it is today because of the people that have preserved and grown the organization since its inception in 1894.

Coming into this year I thought I had a robust understanding of the RCBA and the many people who tirelessly serve this organization. What I have learned is that there are so many more people than I previously appreciated who give their time, talent, and treasure to keep the RCBA advancing year after year. Thank you for making the RCBA an organization I am so proud to be a member of.

It is the steadfast commitment of our community that sets it apart from many other professional organizations. RCBA is the perfect combination of individuals who have dedicated decades to this organization, while still welcoming new engagement and new ideas with open arms. I always encourage young attorneys to get involved with the RCBA because whether it's through the Barristers, the New Attorney Academy, or an RCBA committee, the RCBA welcomes and promotes the development of the next generation.

This year we focused on a return to in-person participation and opportunities for our members to meaningfully connect to deepen community building and networking. Our members responded positively with fantastic attendance and engagement throughout the year. I want to thank the section chairs and committee chairs for meeting the moment and providing thoughtful opportunities for both in-person and remote engagement opportunities.

The RCB Foundation charities brought purposeful opportunities for our members to give back to the community at large. Thank you, Alexandra Fong, Jacqueline Carey-Wilson, and Brian Percy.

The Barristers ROCKED it this year! So many awesome events for our young and new attorneys to enjoy. It was wonderful to see so many new faces. I look forward to seeing how this group will continue to grow the RCBA. Congratulations, Sharon Ramirez, on a wonderful year as president and we look forward to Nolan Kistler's presidency in the year ahead.

Thank you to Jacqueline Carey-Wilson and the Publications Committee for keeping our members informed with the *Riverside Lawyer* magazine. Thank you to everyone who authored an article this year. I have seen firsthand how much heart and time you all put in—it does not go unnoticed.

Thank you to the RCBA Board—Mark Easter, Elisabeth Lord, Goushia Farook, Lauren Vogt, Chris Jensen, Chris Johnson, Erica Alfaro, Alex Barraza, Summer DeVore, and Sharon Ramirez—you brought unwavering commitment to betterment of the RCBA to every board meeting. You showed up throughout the year with excitement and dedication. Thank you for your amazing support.

Thank you to Charlene Nelson and our RCBA staff. They work tirelessly day in and day out to serve this organization, bring our vision to life and serve the greater community at large. Our amazing staff is the backbone of this organization, and I could not be more thankful for all their hard work.

Thank you to every individual who served as an education speaker, helped at an event, mentored a younger attorney, attended an event, shopped for an Elves gift, read a book to student, shook a hand, or shared a smile with a fellow member. We are a stronger organization because of our engaged membership, and we value every one of you.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as president of the RCBA this year. It has truly been an honor and privilege to serve this organization in this capacity. I look forward to using this opportunity not as the conclusion of my involvement, but as a jumping off point for my continued dedication to this community.

I look forward to supporting Elisabeth Lord of Lord & Brooker, APC, as she begins her journey as RCBA president in September. Elisabeth is a thoughtful and intentional leader that will bring great strength to this organization.

Please mark your calendar to join us at this year's Installation Dinner on Thursday, September 24, 2026, at the Mission Inn.

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





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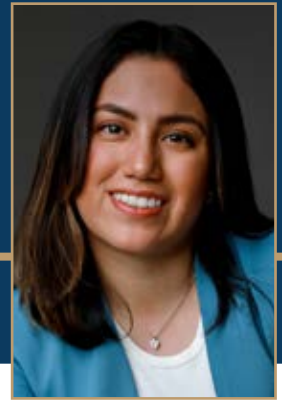
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# BARRISTERS

## President's Message

by Sharon P. Ramirez



As I sit down to write this, my final message as Barristers President, I find myself returning to where it all began. In the fall of 2021, my brother Kenny handed me a copy of this very magazine and pointed me toward the New Attorney Academy. I was nervous, not yet officially an attorney, and unsure if I belonged. What I found instead was a community that welcomed me with open arms.

This past term as Barristers President has, without question, been the most rewarding chapter of my professional career so far. I say that not because of any single event or milestone, but because of what this year has confirmed for me: that Barristers is, at its heart, a family. A family that shows up for one another, celebrates one another, and lifts each other up in a profession that can otherwise feel isolating.

As a first-generation attorney, I have always believed that Barristers is the kind of organization that does not just open the door for young lawyers, it pulls up a chair and makes room at the table. Getting to lead that effort this term, alongside a board and membership I deeply admire, has been a true honor.

### Honoring Tradition and Creating New Memories

When our board set out at the beginning of this term, our goals were simple: grow participation, offer experiences that genuinely add value, and, above all, have fun. Looking back, I am so proud of how fully we embraced these goals.

We continued the traditions that make Barristers what it is, including our monthly happy hours, volunteering as wrapping elves for the RCBA Elves Program, our annual Disneyland Day, Wine Tasting in Temecula, just to name a few. We also continued our amazing partnership with JAMS to host a CLE with Judge Chad Firetag (Ret.) and made serving our community a priority through our partnerships with UC Riverside, La Verne Law School, and the Riverside County Mock Trial



Sharon Ramirez, Nolan Kistler, Sara Truitt

Competition. And our 7th Annual Judicial Reception at Grier Pavilion was one of the most well-attended to-date, a beautiful full-circle moment honoring Judge Sophia Choi and Public Defender Steven Harmon in front of our Riverside community.

We leaned into new ideas such as Puppy Yoga and Barristers Brunch, both of which became an instant favorite for our members. We also launched a five-week group golf lesson series that sold out. None of these existed a year ago, and each one is now a memory shared by various members who showed up for something different.

But more than any single event, what has meant the most to me is the connections that were made through Barristers. Watching new faces from this year's New Attorney Academy walk into a happy hour and leave with new friends. Watching longtime members bring their colleagues, and seeing members join us again and again, because the Riverside legal community understands something powerful, that we are stronger together. That growth did not happen by accident. It happened because our members chose, month after month, to show up for one another.

### Congratulations to the 2026-2027 Barristers Board!

President - Nolan B. Kistler

President Elect - Sara E. Truitt

Treasurer - Derek Diemer

Secretary - Elia Vazquez

Members at Large - Briana Heiting, Faran Imani, Edgar Lopez, Amanda Perez, Erika Perez

Past President - Sharon P. Ramirez

I could not be more excited to pass the torch to our President-Elect, Nolan B. Kistler. Nolan has served this board with dedication for three years running and his genuine desire to make sure our members feel



*Wine tasting in Temecula*

welcome make him exactly the kind of leader Barristers needs. Nolan, I cannot wait to watch you and the incoming board build on everything this community has created.

To the incoming 2026-2027 Board, congratulations, and welcome. You are inheriting a community with real momentum, and I know you will carry it forward in ways that make Barristers even better.

To the 2025-2026 Board, Nolan Kistler, Kevin Collins, Henry Andriano, Derek Diemer, Faran Imani, Amanda Perez, Sara Truitt, Elia Vazquez, and Summer DeVore, thank you. Thank you for the early mornings scoring mock trial, to the time spent planning out and attending our new events, the sponsors you reached out to, and the members you personally invited. None of what we accomplished this term happened without every one of you. I am grateful to have served alongside you, and proud to call you friends and colleagues.

### **Thank you to our 2025-2026 Sponsors**

The events organized during this term would not have been possible without the generosity of our sponsors. One of our other goals this year was to grow our sponsor partnerships, and I am proud to share that we closed out the term with a record number of sponsors, the most in Barristers history. To each of you, thank you. Thank you for believing in this organization and in the young attorneys who make it up. Your support does not just fund a happy hour or a reception, it tells our members that the Riverside legal community is invested in their growth, and that means more than you know. We are endlessly grateful for your support.

- Platinum Sponsors: Costa Vista Chiropractic, Integrated Medical Center, Kenny Ramirez Law

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- Judicial Reception Raffle Sponsor: Veritext Legal Solutions

### **Final Events of the 2025-2026 Term**

Before this term officially closes, we have a few more events, including some new ones on calendar, and I hope to see you there:

- \* **Barristers July Happy Hour** – Thursday, July 9, 2026, 5:30pm, Killer Queens, appetizers sponsored by Varner & Brandt
- \* **CLE with Riverside DA Mike Hestrin and Riverside PD Steven Harmon** – Thursday, July 23, 2026, 5:30-7pm, RCBA Building, RSVP here: <https://barristers-july2026-cle.eventbrite.com>
- \* **Joint Bar End-of-Summer Mixer**, Thursday, July 30, 2026, Lake Alice, RSVP here: <https://hbaie.wildapricot.org/event-6743103>, use code "Barristers" to register for free
- \* **Bowling Social** – Wednesday, July 29, 2026 – more information coming soon!
- \* **Top Golf Social** – Wednesday, August 19, 2026 – more information coming soon!
- \* **August Happy Hour** – August 2026 – more information coming soon! Appetizers sponsored by Integrated Medical Center
- \* **Tech & AI CLE** – August 2026 – more information coming soon!

### **Barristers Board Spotlight: Derek M. Diemer, 2025-2026 Member-at-Large**

Last up is Derek!

Derek M. Diemer is an attorney with Thompson & Colegate LLP in downtown Riverside where he is a member of the firm's commercial department, specializing in trust and estates administration and litigation, conservatorships, financial elder abuse litigation, real estate and construction disputes, and business transactions and litigation. This is his first year serving on the Barristers

Board. In his spare time, Derek enjoys writing screenplays, playing golf, and watching football.

### Thank You

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." That quote, often attributed to Maya Angelou, has stayed with me throughout this term. Events end, boards turn over, and details fade. But the feeling of walking into a room and being genuinely glad to be there and connect with others, that is what people remember. That is what Barristers has given so many of us, myself included.

To every member who showed up to a happy hour, wrapped a gift for the Elves Program, laughed with us at Disneyland, hiked Mt. Rubidoux at sunrise, or simply took a chance on a new event, thank you. You are Barristers. You made this the most rewarding year of my career, and I will carry this experience, and this community, with me for the rest of my professional life.

It has been a true honor to serve as Barristers President. Thank you, RCBA. Thank you, Barristers. See you at the next happy hour!

### Stay up to date on everything Barristers!

For upcoming events and updates:

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

Facebook: RCBA Barristers

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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](mailto: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](mailto:sramirez@ramirezlaw.com).*



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# The Fourth of July, Bankruptcy and the IEBF

by Michael Gouveia

The Inland Empire Bankruptcy Forum (IEBF)<sup>1</sup> is a local bar association dedicated to all things bankruptcy in the Inland Empire. It was started over thirty years ago by the local bankruptcy trustees and members of the Riverside and San Bernardino bankruptcy community. Formerly the local group was part of the Los Angeles Bankruptcy Forum. The IEBF is now part of the California Bankruptcy Forum.<sup>2</sup>

While the IEBF did not exist on July 4, 1776, the concept of bankruptcy dates back to before the colonies.

In 1776, at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the thirteen colonies operated under English law, which included England's bankruptcy laws.<sup>3</sup> Under that system, those who could not pay their debts were often thrown in to debtors' prisons until they could pay their debts.<sup>4</sup>

In 1781, The Articles of Confederation contained no reference to bankruptcy law. When the United States Constitution was ratified by the states in 1788, it authorized enactment of federal bankruptcy laws.

Bankruptcy in the US Constitution is governed by the **Bankruptcy Clause in Article I, Section 8, Clause 4**. The clause grants Congress the power to establish "*uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States.*"

Though bankruptcy practice is federal law, each state enacts its own laws to interpret the federal statutes. In the 1990s, the IEBF began as a way for the practitioners in the Inland Empire to learn about the how federal and state law impacted local bankruptcy practice.

## The IEBF Today and its Educational Mission

The current IEBF officers are Michael Gouveia, president/program chair; Nathan Smith, president-elect of Malcolm Cisneros, ALC; Yang Yang, treasurer from Shulman Bastian Friedman Bui and O'Dea LLP; Shalah Fisher, secretary from the Inland Counties Legal Services; and Tinho Mang, immediate past president employed by Marshack Hays Wood LLP. The IEBF Directors are

Charles Daff, Charles W. Daff, APC; Venice Gamble, Moglia Advisors; Richard Marshack of Marshack Hays Wood LLP; and Summer M. Shaw, Shaw & Hanover, PC.

We began this year with an in person "Welcome 2026" event at Presidential Lounge at Mission Inn. Then in February, we had another face to face event in Riverside with local bankruptcy practitioner Shalah Fisher speaking on chapter 7 practice.

This year, the IEBF has held three zoom video lunchtime educational events: In February 2026, "The Basics of Chapter 7" with Chapter 7 Trustee Larry Simons. On March 26, 2026, "Discharging Student Loans in Bankruptcy" with US Bankruptcy Judge Magdalena Reyes Bordeaux, Assistant US Attorney Elan Levey, and Jenny Doling of Doling Law, PC. Then in May, we presented another webinar: "Chapter 13: The Top 10 Mistakes Attorneys and Staff Make" with Chapter 13 Trustee Rod Danielson's staff attorney Bridget Kelly.

## In the Coming Months, the IEBF Has Planned:

"Recent Decisions on Bankruptcy Trustee and Receiver Immunity" with Richard Marshack, Ed Hays and Len Schulman scheduled for July 15, 2026 as a lunchtime zoom webinar.

On August 19, 2026, we will present another webinar: "Motions in Chapter 13: What Evidence Do You Need?" with Bridget Kelly of Mr. Danielson's office and myself.

Then on October 24, 2026, the IEBF hosts the in person "32nd Annual Survey of Consumer Bankruptcy Law" where the Hon. Scott Yun and the Hon. Magdalena Reyes Bordeaux are scheduled to present on recent bankruptcy case law. Brandon Iskander of Goe Forsythe & Hodges LLP coordinates this event.

## New Bankruptcy Judges Coming to the Riverside Division

In the next few months, the Central District of California, Riverside Division and the IEBF will welcome two new Bankruptcy Judges that will sit in the Riverside Division. Stay tuned for details.

## Fourth of July Memories by IEBF Members:

When asked about the 250th anniversary of the Fourth of July and their memories of July Fourth,<sup>5</sup> IEBF members talked about spending time with family and friends.

Shalah Fisher remembered time around her family's pool and enjoying the day together. Richard Marshack

<sup>1</sup> Membership in the IEBF is open to all at \$95.00 per person (pro-rated to \$50 after July 1). For more information visit [www.IEBF.org](http://www.IEBF.org)

<sup>2</sup> The California Bankruptcy Forum consists of the Bay Area Bankruptcy Forum, the Central California Bankruptcy Forum, the IEBF, the Los Angeles Bankruptcy Forum, the Orange County Bankruptcy Forum, the Sacramento Valley Forum and the San Diego Bankruptcy Forum. See <https://www.calbf.org/>

<sup>3</sup> ABI "An Early History of Bankruptcy Statutes and Economic Conditions from 1776 to 1978" by Donald L. Swanson. <https://www.abi.org/feed-item/an-early-history-of-bankruptcy-statutes-and-economic-conditions-in-the-us-1776-to-1978>

<sup>4</sup> See "A Constitutional History of Debtors' Prisons" by Nino C. Monea, Drexell Law Review. Vol 14:1, [https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/law/law%20review/v14-1/Monea\\_1.ashx](https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/law/law%20review/v14-1/Monea_1.ashx)

<sup>5</sup> When I asked Riverside family and friends about their memories of the July 4th, several mentioned watching Mt. Rubidoux burn after the annual fireworks show.

remembered biking in Aspen, Colorado with his fiancée, Summer Shaw.

My Fourth of July memory was from July 4, 1976, and my father driving my family back from the beach. I looked out the car window at the Prado Dam<sup>6</sup> with the recently painted "200 Years of Freedom 1776-1976" mural proudly displayed.

Happy 250th America! If you want to learn about bankruptcy law as it is practiced in the Inland Empire and about upcoming events contact us at IEBF.org.

*Michael Gouveia is the IEBF's President and a local bankruptcy lawyer helping families in financial crisis.*



<sup>6</sup> Prado Dam is an earth-fill dry dam across the Santa Ana River at the Chino Hills near Corona, California in Riverside County with the resulting impounded water creating Prado Flood Control Basin reservoir. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prado\\_Dam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prado_Dam)

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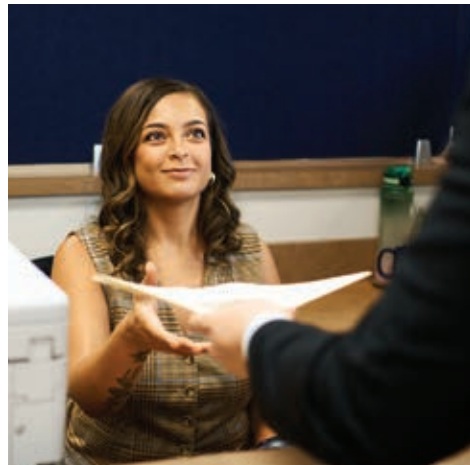
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# America's 250th Anniversary: Renewing the Promise of Equal Justice in the Inland Empire

by Mitchell Suliman

This year marks 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a moment that redirected the course of our nation and, in many ways, the world. On July 4, 1776, fifty-six individuals pledged “their Lives, their Fortunes and their sacred Honor” to a bold proposition: that all people are created equal, possess rights no government may rightfully take away, and that legitimate government derives its power from the consent of the governed.

The Declaration did more than announce the birth of a new nation. It articulated principles that have challenged every generation to build a society that more faithfully reflects its founding ideals. Although it did not establish our system of government, those ideals were later given enduring structure through the Constitution and protected by the rule of law.

For the Federal Bar Association, Inland Empire Chapter, this anniversary is both a celebration and an opportunity for reflection. Our nation's founding deserves recognition, but so does our continuing responsibility to preserve the constitutional principles that transformed revolutionary ideals into lasting institutions. Through the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and the protection of individual rights, the Constitution provides the framework that allows liberty to endure.

For lawyers, judges, and public servants, these principles are more than words on parchment. The rule of law depends on institutions—and the people within them—committed to fairness, integrity, and equal justice. Every day in federal courthouses across the country, those ideals are put into practice as courts resolve disputes according to law, safeguard constitutional rights, and ensure that every person is treated with dignity and fairness.

These commitments carry particular significance in the Inland Empire. Riverside and San Bernardino counties are among the fastest-growing and most diverse regions in the country, reflecting both the promise and the challenges of modern America. While our communities are innovative and resilient, many residents still encounter significant barriers when seeking access to the federal justice system.

The Declaration proclaims equality, and the Constitution seeks to protect it through due process and equal protection. Those guarantees, however, are meaningful only if people can access the courts. Geographic

distance, financial hardship, language barriers, and limited judicial resources should never determine whether someone can vindicate their rights.

That is why expanding the Inland Empire's federal judicial infrastructure remains so important. The region's rapid growth has outpaced the federal resources available to serve it. Litigants, attorneys, jurors, witnesses, and court personnel often shoulder unnecessary burdens simply to access federal judicial services. Ensuring meaningful access to justice requires continued investment, including a modern federal courthouse and the resources necessary to serve one of California's fastest-growing regions.

A courthouse is more than a building. It is where constitutional principles become reality—where citizens fulfill their civic duty through jury service, where government action is reviewed, where individual liberties are protected, and where disputes are resolved peacefully under the rule of law. As our communities grow, the institutions entrusted with administering justice must grow as well.

Members of the bench and bar, together with community leaders, have worked to raise awareness of these growing needs. Through educational initiatives, civic engagement, partnerships among legal organizations, and discussions with policymakers, they have emphasized a simple truth: access to justice is not merely a legal concern—it is a public good that strengthens confidence in our democratic institutions.

At the same time, our region offers much that reflects the very best of our federal judiciary and legal community. The federal judiciary serving the Inland Empire reflects the communities it serves in diversity, talent, and character. Federal judges and magistrate judges bring varied professional experiences and personal backgrounds that strengthen public confidence in the courts. While every case must be decided impartially under the law, a judiciary that reflects the people it serves reinforces the belief that justice is administered fairly and that our courts belong to everyone.

The Declaration was intentionally aspirational. Its promise that “all men are created equal” has challenged each generation to narrow the distance between our ideals and our reality. Through constitutional amendments, legislation, and judicial decisions, America has continued

striving toward that promise. Ours is not a history of perfection, but of continual progress.

As we commemorate this anniversary, we must also look ahead. Population growth, increasing caseloads, technological change, and persistent barriers to legal access require renewed investment in the institutions that sustain the rule of law. Federal judges, court staff, prosecutors, public defenders, legal aid organizations, private practitioners, and many other public servants each play an essential role in ensuring that the Declaration's promise remains meaningful in practice.

The Federal Bar Association, Inland Empire Chapter, is proud to support that work. Our mission is to promote excellence within the federal legal community, foster professionalism and civility, strengthen relationships between the bench and bar, and expand public understanding of the federal judiciary. Those goals reflect values that have guided our Nation for 250 years: liberty, equal justice, civic responsibility, and fidelity to the Constitution.

The signing of the Declaration launched an extraordinary experiment in self-government. The Constitution transformed that experiment into a durable republic governed by law rather than by individuals. Preserving that legacy requires more than remembering history. It

requires strong institutions, accessible courts, and a continued commitment to equal justice under law.

As the Inland Empire Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, we honor America's 250th anniversary by recommitting ourselves to the ideals proclaimed in 1776 and to the constitutional values that continue to protect them today.

*Mitchell Suliman is a deputy federal public defender and serves as president of the Federal Bar Association, Inland Empire Chapter.*



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# Graduation of 12th Class of the RCBA-Riverside Superior Court New Attorney Academy

by Robyn A. Lewis



In October of 2014, the Riverside County Bar Association and the Riverside Superior Court launched a new training program for new attorneys, the New Attorney Academy.

The purpose of the New Attorney Academy (hereafter “the Academy”) is to provide professional guidance and counsel to assist newly admitted attorneys in acquiring the practical skills, judgment, and professional values necessary to practice law in a highly competent manner and to encourage sensitivity to ethical and professional values that represent the traditions and standards of the Inland Empire legal community.

On May 15, 2026, the Academy was pleased to graduate its 12th class, which was its largest class, to date.

The Academy was made up of a series of classes, which took place once a month from October through May. The curriculum was taught by judges and noted attorneys in the community. Faculty included the following prominent attorneys: Public Defender Steve Harmon, Elisabeth Lord, Virginia Blumenthal, Darryl Exum, Chris Jensen, Steve Geeting, Bryan Reid, Greg Rizio, Rima Badawiya, Steve Goldstein, Daniel Kruid, Jeanne Behling, Mike Marlatt, Bill Shapiro, Jason Sanchez, John Lowenthal, Darren Pirozzi, Daren Lipinsky, Brian Hannemann, Megan Demshki, Justin King, Maryann Briseno, and Robyn Lewis. Court of Appeal Presiding Justice Manuel Ramirez, Presiding Judge Jacqueline Jackson, and Judges John Vineyard, David Bristow, Chris Harmon, Sophia Choi, Jackson Lucky (Ret.), and Chad Firetag (Ret.) along with Commissioners Nick Firetag and Jeremiah Raxter also volunteered their time as instructors, as did Greg Vidler, the ADR coordinator for the Riverside Superior Court and Karen Gilkeson, the managing attorney for the Court of Appeal (4th District, Division 2). Countless court staff, including Ozturk

Ciftcikara, Daniel Wolfe, Julie Eun, Tamica Dowell, Jennifer Castillo, Eric Toldeo, and other bench officers also provided valuable insight for the Academy students.

Topics of the classes included an introduction to the legal community, a practical and intensive primer on pleadings, depositions and discovery, an introduction to practicing in court (court appearances, legal writing and research, pet peeves of the bench, etc.), transition into practice (dealing with clients, how to successfully participate in ADR, relations with other attorneys, case management, etc.) and an introduction to trial and appellate practice. Students were given tours of the Historic Courthouse, including a “behind the scenes look” at the clerk’s office, and the Court of Appeal, as well as at the Hall of Justice and the Family Law Court. The April class was an introduction to trial that included an interactive class on voir dire and tips on openings, closings, direct and cross examinations from some of the most notable trial attorneys in the Inland Empire, including Bill Shapiro, current national ABOTA president. In May, the students had the privilege of having a personal tour of the Court of Appeal from Presiding Justice Manuel Ramirez.

At every session, the class attended the monthly RCBA General Membership meeting for that month, so as to promote membership in that organization and to allow for class members to participate in their legal community.

Students of the Academy were recognized for their participation at the May 2026 RCBA General Membership meeting and received a certificate, graduating them from the Academy.

Overall, the Academy was an enormous success, which is due in large part to the efforts of the Riverside Superior Court and members of ABOTA (American Board of Trial Advocates) and members



Mike Marlatt and Bill Shapiro

of the New Attorney Academy Steering Committee, which include Robyn Lewis, Greg Rizio, Judge Chris Harmon, Judge Sophia Choi, Judge Randy Stamen, Judge John Vineyard, Judge Jackson Lucky (retired), Commissioner Jeremiah Raxter, Megan Demshki, and Elisabeth Lord. And, of course, RCBA Executive Director Charlene Nelson is invaluable to the program and its success.

Finally, this year marked the last year that Judge John Vineyard will be serving as a member of the Academy's Steering Committee. I want to take this opportunity to thank him as he was instrumental in planning and structuring the Academy. Without his input and support, the program would

never have become what it is today. While Judge Vineyard is extremely involved in many aspects of our legal community, he often works behind the scenes and does not ever expect any recognition. I want to sincerely thank him for all of his contributions. We will miss him on the Steering Committee!

If you are interested in obtaining more information about the 2026-2027 Academy, please contact Charlene Nelson at the Riverside County Bar Association or Robyn Lewis at [robynlewis@jlewislaw.com](mailto:robynlewis@jlewislaw.com).

*Robyn A. Lewis is with the firm of J. Lewis and Associates, APLC, chair of the New Attorney Academy and a past president of the RCBA.*



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# Capturing George Washington: The Gilbert Stuart Portraits

by Abram S. Feuerstein

As his fortunes dwindled in Europe and his debts mounted, America's finest portrait painter, the Rhode Island-born Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828), returned to the United States in May 1793 where he was determined to "make a fortune" producing a "plurality of portraits" of George Washington.<sup>1</sup>

And so he did. Of the almost 1100 paintings attributed to Stuart, nearly one-tenth are images of Washington.<sup>2</sup> A reluctant Washington sat for the painter on only three occasions. But the three resulting originals spawned numerous Stuart reproductions. The demand for Washington portraits was insatiable, here and in Europe. Clients eager to have their own portraits painted by the "Washington" painter also added their names to the list of customers clamoring for their own personal Washington copy.<sup>3</sup>

To meet the demand, Stuart hired assistants and students to help churn out the paintings.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes painting two simultaneously, he could charge more for a reproduction based on the amount of time he personally spent on the work.<sup>5</sup> And still more if it came with a certificate of authenticity.<sup>6</sup> Tracing cloths and drawing instruments in hand, he estimated that he spent two hours on each copy.<sup>7</sup>

Stuart called the paintings his \$100 bills, the minimal charge for a Gilbert Stuart Washington replica.<sup>8</sup> Although Stuart was not particularly happy with the assembly line nature of producing more Washingtons, as a profligate spender and a poor financial manager, he simply needed the money. "I paint for bread," Stuart later told an interviewer.<sup>9</sup> Sure, Stuart would receive idiotic inquiries about whether all the replicas had been painted by Stuart from life. To one such query, Stuart said "(i)f the General had to sit for all these portraits, he could have done nothing else; our indepen-



*Gilbert Stuart self-portrait  
(ca 1778)*



*George Washington  
(The Athenaeum Portrait 1796).*

dence would have been a secondary matter; or out of the question."<sup>10</sup>

## Sitting with Washington

The series of three live sittings with Washington had been challenging enough for Stuart. Washington initially agreed to the sessions when Stuart presented a letter of introduction from a mutual friend, John Jay, who served from 1789 to 1795 as the first Chief Justice of the United States.<sup>11</sup> Stuart had known Jay in Europe in 1782 when Jay was negotiating the Treaty of Paris. Upon Stuart's return to the United States, Jay commissioned Stuart to paint his own portrait.

The historical record of when and where the Stuart-Washington sittings took place is somewhat murky.<sup>12</sup> By the time of the first sitting, Washington was 63 years old and in the middle of his second term. Stuart possessed a gift of gab and had developed a conversational style that delighted his clients and put his subjects at ease.<sup>13</sup> It enabled Stuart to draw out the sitter's personality. The technique did not work on the serious minded and taciturn Washington, who likely had grown annoyed with endless requests from artists wanting to paint and profit from his image. Stuart reported that "(a)n apathy seemed to seize him and a vacuity spread over his countenance, most appalling to paint."<sup>14</sup> Stuart also noted that he felt overwhelmed by Washington's presence.<sup>15</sup>

## The Vaughan, Athenaeum & Lansdowne Portraits

The first sitting produced what is known as the "Vaughan" type portrait. It and the ensuing two Washington portrait types, the "Athenaeum" and "Lansdowne" portraits, are named for the well-known purchasers who acquired the paintings at some point in their history. Stuart considered the Vaughan portrait a failure.<sup>16</sup> He believed

1 Dorinda Evans, *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart*, p. 53 (Princeton University Press 1999) (quoting Stuarts words as told to an Irish artist, James Dowling Herbert). Evans, who died last year, had been an art history professor at Emory University. The author of this article has relied heavily on Evans' volume (hereinafter "Evans"), a readable, scholarly, and comprehensive work.

2 See <https://www.nga.gov/artworks/56916-george-washington>.

3 Evans, p. 84.

4 Evans, p. 83.

5 Evans, p. 84.

6 Evans, p. 89.

7 Evans, pp. 83, 85.

8 Evans, p. 83.

9 Evans, p. 99.

10 Evans, pp. 87-88.

11 Evans, p. 53.

12 See generally, Carrie Rebora Barratt and Ellen G. Miles, *Gilbert Stuart* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Yale University Press 2004), p. 133-35 (hereinafter, "Barratt/Miles").

13 John Adams, whom Stuart painted from life both while Adams was president and then, later, when Adams was a frail man near the end of life, commented that he "should like to sit to Stuart from the first of January to the last of December, for he lets me do just as I please and keeps me constantly amused by his conversation." Barratt/Miles, p. 5.

14 See C.R. Barratt, "Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828)," October 1, 2003, retrieved at <https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/gilbert-stuart-1755-1828>.

15 Evans, p. 61.

16 Evans, p. 63.

he had not captured Washington's true character. But Stuart had a second opportunity to paint Washington in March 1796 when Martha commissioned a painting of herself and a companion one of the General for their Mount Vernon residence.<sup>17</sup>

This second series of sittings yielded the Athenaeum portrait, the unfinished painting<sup>18</sup> that underpins if not defines the image we have today of Washington. It is the face that adorned American postage stamps for most of the 19th century, and which appears as the engraving on the one-dollar bill. During the sitting, Stuart apparently told jokes to Washington in an attempt to loosen him up.<sup>19</sup> When that didn't work, Stuart turned the topic of conversation to horses, a favorite subject for Washington.<sup>20</sup> That did the trick. Stuart, who embraced the pseudoscience of physiognomy,<sup>21</sup> believed that he had depicted successfully in paint Washington's inner strength, morality, and wisdom.<sup>22</sup> With one exception. Stuart recounted: "When I painted him, he had just had a set of false teeth inserted, which accounts for the constrained expression so noticeable about the mouth and lower part of the face."<sup>23</sup>

Stuart knew what he had accomplished with the Athenaeum portrait, both as a lasting work of art and a continuing source of income. He kept it in his studio until his death in 1828, when the painting was sold to the Boston Athenaeum.<sup>24</sup> Resisting efforts by Washington family members to reclaim the portrait, he asserted that Washington personally had agreed Stuart could retain the painting in order to produce replicas from it.<sup>25</sup>

Whereas the Vaughan and Athenaeum types are head and shoulder images of Washington, the Lansdowne, painted sometime in 1796, is full length and larger than life (97 ½ x 62 ½ in).<sup>26</sup> It shows Washington in



*George Washington  
(Lansdowne Portrait 1796).*



*The Skater (Portrait of William Grant 1782). Its positive reception enabled Stuart to set up his own studio.*

formal civilian dress (a black velvet suit), the right arm outstretched and gesturing as if he is giving a speech (to Congress urging passage of the Jay Treaty? the Farewell address?), and with important symbols of Washington's life surrounding him.

In the Lansdowne, Washington's non-gesturing hand rests on the hilt of a ceremonial sword representative of the General's military career; the books positioned behind a beautifully carved table leg and those on top of the table are titled as if chapters in Washington's life of public service: "General Orders," "American Revolution," "Constitution & Laws of the United States," "Federalism" and "Journal of Congress."<sup>27</sup> Other objects in the painting add meaning about either Washington (an inkwell engraved with the Washington family coat of arms) or the new nation (a rainbow signifying the end of conflict; a medallion with the stars and stripes; a bald eagle carved into the table leg).<sup>28</sup> And, of course, the head in the Lansdowne is a grafted version of the unfinished Athenaeum.

The Lansdowne was an instant success. As with Stuart's other Washington portraits, it generated requests for copies and a demand for engravings – some authorized by the artist, some not.<sup>29</sup> Stuart could charge as much as \$1,000 for a framed "original" of the Lansdowne,<sup>30</sup> or an amount equal to approximately \$25,000 to \$30,000 today. Although the original remained in England for 170 years, Stuart copies of the work were deemed a national treasure. So much so that with the British poised to attack Washington, D.C. in August 1814, Dolley Madison and her staff cut the eight-foot-tall painting from its frame and took the portrait with them as they fled the White House.<sup>31</sup>

## Likenesses and Legacy

When Stuart left the United States for England in 1775 at age 20, his talent was quickly recognized by the two great American born painters residing in England, John Singleton

Copley and Benjamin West. Employed as West's assistant to paint background elements for West's portraits and history paintings, Stuart absorbed the prevailing portraiture techniques and traditions. Then, in 1782, Stuart painted William

<sup>17</sup> Evans, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Evans states that Stuart was "inclined to lose interest in a likeness after completing the head." Evans, p. xvii. She notes that Stuart left many "disembodied" heads or unfinished pictures in his studio when he died. Evans, p. 113. But she also suggests that he may have intentionally left work unfinished, leaving it to the viewer's imagination to complete. Evans, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Barratt/Miles, p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> Barratt/Miles, p. 151.

<sup>21</sup> Evans, p. 66; Barratt/Miles, p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> Stuart told a visitor that at the Athenaeum sitting, Washington's face was "totally different from what he ever had observed of any other human being" and had Washington "been born in the forests, it was his opinion that he would have been the fiercest man among the savage tribes." Evans, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup> Barratt/Miles, p. 139.

<sup>24</sup> Today it is owned jointly by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the National Portrait Gallery.

<sup>25</sup> Evans, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Initially purchased from Stuart by a wealthy Philadelphia merchant as a gift to William Petty, the first Marquess of Lansdowne, the original painting since 2001 has been owned by the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, p. 67.

<sup>28</sup> Barratt/Miles, p. 169; Evans, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> With no American copyright laws, the problem of dealing with forgeries and unauthorized copies plagued Stuart and jeopardized his finances. At one point, Stuart filed a lawsuit and obtained an injunction against a merchant who shipped an Athenaeum replica portrait to China, where they would be reproduced on glass, and shipped back to the United States to be framed and sold. Evans, p. 86.

<sup>30</sup> Evans, p. 84.

<sup>31</sup> Although saving the painting was important, if the painting could not be rescued, she instructed that it not fall "into the hands of the enemy" as its "capture would enable them to make a great flourish." See "Dolley Madison Rescues George Washington," retrieved at [moutvernon.org](http://moutvernon.org).

Grant, a Scottish lawyer, in full length – not as an attorney, but as an ice skater. The work was a breakthrough, and its popularity and critical acclaim enabled Stuart to open his own shop.

Stuart continued to refine his technique while in England and then in Ireland, particularly in painting human flesh but mostly in imbuing his subjects with both human qualities and a spiritual dimension. Years later, he explained that a painter should aim for “animate expression,” and believed with his portraits he succeeded when both “(t)here is stillness and life.”<sup>32</sup> In the Washington portraits, Stuart achieved these goals, leaving us both a very human and an enduring image of our first president.

*Abram S. Feuerstein is employed as a Riverside, California-based federal government lawyer. The views, if any, expressed herein are solely those of the author.*



*John Adams, 1826, by  
Gilbert Stuart.  
Stuart painted  
the first six American  
presidents from life.*

32 Evans, p. 102.

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# The Supreme Court and American Democracy

by Dean Erwin Chemerinsky

If I were to characterize the Supreme Court's October Term 2025, my overall assessment would be that it again showed the importance of there being six conservative justices. The Court ruled in a conservative direction in most of the ideologically divided cases and generally ruled in favor of President Donald Trump, but not always.

What I regard as the most significant theme of the term is that in so many ways, it was about the Supreme Court and American democracy. That is seen in several quite different doctrinal areas. In some areas, such as its decisions on voting and campaign finance, I believe that the Court weakened American democracy. In the area of presidential power, the Court expanded some power in some area, but also imposed checks on aspects of presidential authority.

**Voting rights.** Without question, I believe that the most important decision of the term was *Louisiana v. Callais*, which concerned Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibits state and local governments from having election systems that disadvantage voters of color. Congress amended Section 2 in 1982 to provide that proof of racially discriminatory impact would be sufficient for liability.

There were two crucial aspects to the Court's holding in *Louisiana v. Callais*. First, the Court greatly weakened Section 2 by holding that there must be proof of racially discriminatory intent, which is enormously difficult to prove because rarely do legislators openly express a racist motive. Second, the Court said that it is sufficient for a legislature to say that it is drawing election districts to favor a particular political party. Because Black individuals vote Democratic over 90 percent of the time in Southern states, it will be easy for Republican-controlled state legislatures to engage in redistricting that harms Black voters by saying that the goal is to help Republicans. We immediately saw the effects of this throughout the South. The Louisiana congressional primary was scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2026. On April 30, the day after *Callais* was handed down, Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry suspended the congressional primary, though allowing the primary for other offices to occur on May 16. Florida passed a new map for congressional districts while its primary process was underway. Tennessee's legislature passed a new map on May 7, even though candidates had to qualify to run in March.

*Louisiana v. Callais* will lead to the largest loss of Black representatives in Congress and state legislatures since the end of Reconstruction. After *Louisiana v. Callais*, the one avenue for proving a violation of voting rights is by demonstrating racially discriminatory intent. But in *Allen v. Milligan*, the Court made this much more difficult. A three-judge federal district court found that the Alabama legislature had intentionally discriminated against Black voters. It came to this conclusion after an 11 day hearing and explained it in a 78-page opinion. But the Supreme Court said "the District Court did not heed the presumption of legislative good faith." It is hard to know what else the district court could have done. Together these decisions are a significant weakening of voting rights in the United States.

**Campaign finance.** In 1976, in *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Court held that spending money in election campaigns is speech protected by the First Amendment. The Court articulated a distinction that continues to this day: the government can limit contributions to a candidate or a committee for a candidate, but the government cannot limit expenditures by a person or a corporation. For example, if a person in 2024 had \$1 million to help elect Donald Trump or Kamala Harris, the government could limit the amount the person could contribute to the candidate or a committee for the candidate, but the government could not stop the person from spending \$1 million by purchasing ads directly or expressing support for the candidate.

Coordinating expenditures with the candidate is a way of circumventing contribution limits. Thus, in 2001, the Supreme Court in *Federal Election Commission v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee*, rejected a facial challenge to the ban on coordinated expenditures by political parties on behalf of specific candidates.

In *National Republican Senatorial Committee v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 decision, expressly overruled *Federal Election Commission v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee*. Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote the opinion for the majority. Justice Elena Kagan wrote the dissent.

At the outset of his majority opinion, Justice Kavanaugh acknowledged that the central purpose of preventing political parties from coordinating expenditure limits with candidates was to prevent circumvention of contribution limits. Justice Kavanaugh argued that it is to be expected that political parties will want to coordinate with the candidates who are running under their banner. He said that limits on coordination are restrictions on speech. He wrote: "The limits impair the party's traditional forms of communication such as advertisements; preclude parties from amplifying the voice of their adherents; impose additional monetary costs and burdens on political parties; and inflict a 'stifling effect on the ability of the party to do what it exists to do.'"

Justice Kagan wrote a strong dissent, joined by Justices Sotomayor and Jackson. She explained that for 50 years, the Supreme Court had allowed the government to restrict the amount of money that can be contributed to a candidate for office. This is based on the view that large contributions risk corruption and the appearance of corruption. But now, she said, the Court has allowed easy circumvention by permitting people to give money to the political party, which then coordinates the spending with the candidate. Justice Kagan said that the Court "jettisons a rule needed to protect our democracy's integrity."

The political ramifications are evident from the line-up of the political parties. The lawsuit was brought by J.D. Vance when he was running for Senate in Ohio and by the National Republican Senatorial Committee. The Democratic Party supported the federal law preventing coordination between political parties and candidates. The widespread perception is that

the Supreme Court's decision will help Republicans much more than Democrats.

**Presidential power.** Many of the most important cases of the term involved challenges to President Trump's actions. In some instances, the Court expanded presidential power. In a significant expansion of presidential powers, the Supreme Court in *Trump v. Slaughter* overruled a 90-year-old precedent and held that Congress cannot limit the removal of heads of federal agencies.

In 1935, in *Humphrey's Executor v. United States*, the Court unanimously held that Congress could prevent the president from firing commissioners on the Federal Trade Commission unless there was just cause for the firing. The Court explained that Congress, to carry out its powers, could create federal agencies with some independence from the president and thus could limit removal of commissioners only "for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office."

The Supreme Court followed this principle in many subsequent cases. But the Court in *Trump v. Slaughter* expressly overruled *Humphrey's Executor*. *Trump v. Slaughter* involved Rebecca Slaughter, coincidentally, like in *Humphrey's Executor*, a commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission. In 2018, President Trump nominated, and the Senate unanimously confirmed Rebecca Slaughter, a Democrat, to serve as a seven year term as FTC Commissioner. In 2024, Slaughter was reappointed by President Biden and confirmed by the Senate for a second term. President Trump upon taking office fired Slaughter – and the heads of many other federal agencies – without any claim of cause.

The Supreme Court, in a 6-3 decision, with the majority opinion written by Chief Justice John Roberts, ruled against Slaughter, overruled *Humphrey's Executor*, and embraced the unitary executive theory. Chief Justice Roberts argued that the original intent of the Constitution was to allow the President to remove all executive officials. From this perspective, *Humphrey's Executor*, and all of the cases that applied it, were wrongly decided. The Court concluded its opinion: "To 'discharg[e] the duties of his trust,' the President must have the assistance of officers he can trust. . . . Neither Congress nor the courts may saddle him with those with whom he cannot work. Subordinates who exercise the President's power are subject to removal by him."

But there also were notable instances where the Court said no to President Trump. In *Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump*, the Supreme Court found that President Trump's tariffs were illegal because they lacked constitutional or statutory authority.

In *Trump v. Barbara*, the Court declared unconstitutional President Trump's executive order issued on January 20, 2025, which provides that only those born to citizens or those with green cards are United States citizens. In other words, under the executive order a baby is not a citizen if born to an undocumented immigrant or to a person in the United States on a visa.

Chief Justice John Roberts traced the history. When the United States began in 1787, it followed English law and everyone born in the country was deemed a citizen. This was followed until the Supreme Court's tragic decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), which held that enslaved individuals were property of their owners and that they were not United States citizens, even if they had been born in the United States. The first sentence of section one of the Fourteenth Amendment,

adopted in 1868, unquestionably was expressly meant to overrule this ruling. It declares: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." In 1898, in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, the Supreme Court ruled that this means what it says and that all born in the United States are American citizens, with the limited exception of babies born to foreign diplomats and to soldiers of invading armies. Based on all of this, the Court declared President Trump's effort to limit birthright citizenship to be unconstitutional.

The case is enormously important for the approximately 250,000 babies a year who would be denied citizenship under the Trump executive order. And if President Trump could redefine the Constitution's definition of citizenship, he potentially could do this retroactively and revoke citizenship of millions of individuals who were born to parents here on visas or who were undocumented.

**Conclusion:** As the United States celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, many are concerned about the future of American democracy. In this context, it was stunning to see the many Supreme Court cases that will affect our democracy in the years to come.

*Erwin Chemerinsky is Dean and Jesse H. Choper Distinguished Professor of Law at University of California, Berkeley School of Law.*



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# Project Graduate: A School Year in Review

by L. Alexandra Fong



*Project Graduate Graduation Luncheon 2026*

Project Graduate is a collaborative program between Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA), its charitable entity, Riverside County Bar Foundation, Inc. (Foundation), Riverside County Superior Court (Court), and Riverside County Department of Public Social Services – Children and Family Services (DPSS-CFS). Project Graduate began in 2011 and fifteen years later, many foster youths graduated high school with a path to a successful future.

On September 1, 2025, the 2025-2026 school year

began for Project Graduate. Behind the scenes, each school year begins as the prior school year ends, with applications submitted by foster youth interested in the program by their DPSS-CFS social services practitioners. Although the applications are submitted year-round, the bulk of the interest comes during the summer. Foster youth currently in the program decide whether they wish to return for the new program year.

From September until May, the Court holds a monthly educational calendar, where a Juvenile Court judicial officer meets with the foster student and their appointed educational rights holder to discuss topics related to the student's progress in school and any school-related needs they may have. Other members of the Project Graduate Steering Committee are also

present at this meeting in case an issue needs to be addressed with DPSS-CFS or with the student's court-appointed attorney.

On the evening of March 4, 2026, the Foundation and Project Graduate held a joint fundraiser, themed after the Lewis Carroll classic "Alice in Wonderland." The fundraiser was held at

Riverside Community Players Theatre in downtown Riverside. This event was assembled in just six weeks, from inception to fruition, based upon an idea that Abe Feuerstein, a long-time supporter of Project Graduate and member of the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court's Community Service Team ("Deegan Community Service Team"), had to help the foster youth in our community. Mr. Feuerstein, DPSS-CFS members of the Project Graduate Steering Committee, members of the Deegan Community Service Team, and L. Alexandra Fong, set up the event in the outdoor courtyard of the Community Players Theatre.

With the generosity of our sponsors and silent auction item donors, the Foundation and Project Graduate were able to raise approximately \$11,000 after expenses, to be equally split between the Foundation's general fund<sup>1</sup> and Project Graduate, as outlined within the April 2026 issue of this magazine in the RCBA President's Message.

## **Thank you to the sponsors of our Alice in Wonderland event:**

|                          |                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alice:                   | Aitken Aitken & Cohn<br>Hanson & Mouri<br>Malcolm Cisneros<br>Law Offices of Catherine A. Schwartz.                 |
| Mad Hatter<br>(Theatre): | Abe Feuerstein                                                                                                      |
| Cheshire Cat:            | Aitken Campbell Heikaus Weaver LLP<br>ALL Trial Lawyers<br>Arsany Barraza<br>Mark Easter<br>Thompson & Colegate LLP |
| Caterpillar:             | Lord & Brooker<br>Diane Mar Wiesmann<br>RCBA Barristers                                                             |
| Queen of Hearts:         | Erica Alfaro<br>Canyon Children's Legal Services<br>Hon. Belinda Handy<br>Sharon P. Ramirez                         |

Thank you to our silent auction item donors: Erica Alfaro, Maryann Briseno, Duncombe Law, P.A., Abe Feuerstein, L. Alexandra Fong, Veronica Garcia, Gless Ranch, Paul J. Molinaro, M.D., J.D., Neil Okazaki, Riverside Police Department, Hon. Bernard Schwartz (Ret.), and Thompson & Colegate LLP. Thank you to all who bid on our silent auction items.

On June 25, 2026, Project Graduate hosted its graduation luncheon for our successful students who graduated high

<sup>1</sup> The Foundation's General Fund supports high school students in Riverside County with Mock Trial and Good Citizenship Awards. The Foundation also supports elementary school students with its annual Reading Day program.

*Trevor DeBus, Abe Feuerstein, Alexandra Fong*



school during the 2025-2026 school year. We celebrated the success of three foster youth, who overcame many obstacles in their respective lives to complete their high school education.

Thank you to our sponsors for our luncheon: DPSS-CFS, Juvenile Defense Panel, Janelle Price of Price Legal Practice, and Linda Thomas.

On August 20, 2026, Project Graduate will host a social and mixer at a location in downtown Riverside. Current educational representatives and members of the Project Graduate Steering Committee, as well as students who successfully completed high school and those who continue to meet their goals to complete high school in future program years will be present. Please join us to learn more about our program and how you can help a struggling foster youth graduate from high school!

Project Graduate is seeking educational representatives for our students. If you are interested in learning more about Project Graduate and becoming an educational representative, please contact L. Alexandra Fong at [RCBF.ProjectGraduate@gmail.com](mailto:RCBF.ProjectGraduate@gmail.com).

*L. Alexandra Fong is a deputy county counsel for the County of Riverside, practicing in area of child welfare law. She is chair of the Project Graduate Steering Committee, co-chair of the RCBA's Juvenile Law Section, and a member of the Bar Publications Committee. She is a past president of the Riverside County Bar Association (2017-2018) and a past president (2018-2019) and Emeritus Member of the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court.*



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## Look Who's Joined Us!



### PAUL J. MOLINARO, M.D., ESQ.

When complex medical issues drive the value and outcome of a case, attorneys need a neutral who understands both the medicine and the law. Paul J. Molinaro, M.D., J.D. is an active physician with more than three decades of clinical experience and full-time mediator and arbitrator with more than two decades of litigation experience. With an ongoing medical practice and a career spent litigating complex civil matters, he is uniquely positioned to evaluate medical malpractice, catastrophic injury, wrongful death, products liability, pharmaceutical claims, and other medically intensive disputes

His experience as a court-appointed mediator in Los Angeles, Riverside, and Ventura Counties, combined with his private dispute resolution practice, has earned him a reputation for resolving challenging cases where medical complexity and legal strategy intersect.

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# In Memoriam: Michael H. Clepper (1935-2026)

by Sandy Leer and Steve Harmon

## Part 1 by Sandy Leer

I come not to praise Mike Clepper. (*Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare) I come to remember him.

There are so few of us left who experienced him. He would have liked to be remembered as a legend of the legal community and that he was. Maybe not for the usual reasons associated with legal legend but he left his mark. No one would have enjoyed more than Mike being remembered with humor and affection in spite of his often less than civil behavior in and out of the courtroom. As I spoke with others about Mike's passing, the response was repeatedly that he was a "complicated man," which was said with a smile.

Mike liked to think of himself and referred to himself as "the King of Family Law." He said it often enough that it seemed to be a self-fulfilling prophecy for many years. At least until his supremacy was challenged on a regular basis by an expanding number of family law lawyers who practiced in a more traditional manner. When Mike was early in his practice, he was one of a few family law lawyers. He was known as the one who knew the law. It followed that if a case of his was assigned to a civil judge who saw little of family law, Mike would be recognized as the "expert" by his reputation which preceded him. He earned it and he loved it. He lived that reputation throughout his career.

Mike came from a privileged background. He thought of himself as a person of quality and taste. For example, if there was a State Bar conference in San Francisco, Mike never stayed at the hotel where the conference was being held but always went to the most expensive, four-star hotel where he took a suite and hosted cocktails for the Riverside delegation. Mike loved to tell the story of the time that he was having his drink in the living room, and he could see into the mirrors in the bathroom in the front of the suite to observe our dear and also uppity friend, Judge Dallas Holmes, stuffing packages of soap and lotion into his pockets.



Michael H. Clepper  
RCBA President, 1983

Mike was notorious for his reaction when he was unhappy with someone, usually after he had lost the hearing. He would use his unique comment, "I am not speaking to you." And thereupon he would snub that person every chance he had. He used that tactic on his friends in his golf world as well as other attorneys. My usual response was that I didn't care because I had some other friends. Many others were left with mouths dropped open by this petulant, schoolyard threat. Hence, the description of Mike as "complicated." But Mike weathered the consequences of his bad behavior and maintained his position as a witty and funny guy to be around. Lawyers were pleased to

be Mike's friend, they enjoyed being recognized by him, even insulted by him in humor. How he was able to get away with such bad behavior to remain an important part of our legal world and his golf world is not easy to understand, but his contributions to both the Family Law Court and the Riverside County Bar Association far outweighed the negatives.

Judge Jeff Prevost (Ret.) remembered Mike with fondness. He knew if Mike was on his calendar he would be a delight, gregarious, and uninhibited. That was Mike's way to endear himself to the judges. Judge Prevost recounted how following a chambers conference, Mike would wait until opposing counsel had stepped out and then Mike would make some statement that would literally make the judge's jaw drop (no repeat of the actual words). Hilarious and incorrigible. Judge Prevost also recalled the famous story of Mike receiving a reprimand from a judge when Mike appeared in the courtroom in a shirt and tie. The judge told him he was out of uniform and not to return until he had corrected that. Whereupon Mike disappeared for a few minutes and re-entered the courtroom wearing a jacket belonging to Joe Myers who was several sizes smaller than Mike and making a hilarious appearance.

If you detect a hint of caring and affection for Mike in these later words you are right. We were opposing warriors for years. He once told Judge Gerald Schulte at the conclusion of a divorce trial during argument over my

client's request for attorney fees, "Your honor, Mrs. Leer is a new attorney. Her charges are three times what mine are and my experience is well known. She should not have run up fees as she did." I responded to Judge Schulte that "Mr. Clepper charged exactly what he was worth, and I request the fees it took to get this case here." Judge Schulte, a serious man, chuckled and gave me my fees in full as requested.

Okay, this isn't fair when I recount stories where I look good and Mike doesn't and he can't be here to defend himself. Forgive me for that. In my effort to do justice to Mike as a man in full I find myself enjoying the recounting of so many of these memorable moments. I believe Mike would enjoy these stories as much as I do in the retelling. Although I suspect he would enjoy Steve's report more than mine as usual.

In closing out my part of this co-authored article I have to tell you how this came about. At Mike's retirement party there were probably 120 in attendance. It was a beautiful party at Mike's second home, the Victoria Club. I spoke on the program much in the same vein I have written here. Steve Harmon gave the main address.

Steve had, a couple of years prior, given the eulogy for Bonnie Polis, wife of Gerry Polis, our esteemed, now deceased, prominent criminal defense attorney. The eulogy was the best we had ever heard. Steve captured Bonnie, and Gerry, on that occasion in a way we would never forget. So, when Mike's turn came to speak at this retirement party, he stood at the podium and made the most solemn pledge that he would have Steve Harmon do his eulogy. And further, he requested that Sandra Leer not be allowed to say anything at his memorial service to a roomful of laughter.

So here we are. It had to be this way. Mike will get half of his requests. Steve will turn his Silver Tongue loose to send Mike off as he should be. And I, who covered his cases for him when he was out ill with heart surgery or

other times he couldn't work, took this task on trusting that readers will know Mike was unique. Mike was special. He was a man who could have been the subject of a Eugene O'Neill one act play. Now I rest and look to Steve.

## Part 2 by Steve Harmon

I wish you had known Mike Clepper. You would have hated him. And, then, you would have loved him. He was just that kind of guy. He lived life on the edges: outrageous – charming; infuriating – kind; aggravating – caring. He was always one or the other – never in between. That made him fascinating and irresistible. You couldn't take your eyes off of him. Every day the talk in the courthouse and on the golf course always started with: "Did you hear what Clepper did today?"

As for me, I loved him. I didn't always like him, but I always loved him. I could never understand how in one minute he could make you so mad at him, but in the next minute he could make you feel he was your best friend. I'm not saying that this was good, but for some reason it was true. He is the only person I've ever known to be able to make all that work. There was a time when for some reason Mike didn't speak to me for three years and then all of a sudden, he was not only speaking to me again, but I felt we were best friends. I later told him that however my life turns out, at least I can say I had three good years. We both couldn't stop laughing.

Mike taught me how to be a lawyer: how to be prepared; how to handle myself in the courtroom; how to speak to judges; how to use humor in tense situations; how to explain things to clients; how to bill (he was good at that). He also taught me the importance of giving back to our legal community by participating in our Riverside County Bar Association. Although Mike was not always a good role model, most of the time he was the best.

As I said, I loved Mike. And, because he lived life large and was such a large influence in my life, losing him has left a large hole in my heart. There will never be another Mike Clepper and I'm sad. I just wish you had known him.

*Sandy Leer was RCBA President in 1991 and Steve Harmon was RCBA President in 1995.*



## NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the RCBA Board of Directors has scheduled a "business meeting" to allow members an opportunity to address the proposed budget for 2027. The budget will be available after August 10. If you would like a copy of the budget, a copy will be available at the RCBA office.

**Wednesday, August 12  
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# In Memoriam: William E. Thomas

by Peter Mort

Riverside has lost one of its finest citizens and esteemed members of the bar. On April 13, 2026, William "Bill" Thomas passed away.

Born in Riverside in 1948, Bill attended Poly High School before heading off to U.C. Santa Barbara where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He received his J.D. from U.C. Hastings College of Law. His first position was with the Securities and Exchange Commission followed by a fellowship in securities and corporate law at NYU. Returning to the west coast Bill accepted a position with Loeb and Loeb. The pull of home proved strong, and Bill and his wife, Terre, moved back to Riverside to raise their two daughters, Kelly and Tracy.

In 1982, Bill, along with Don Dye and Roger Luebs, founded their own firm. Nine months later I joined. Over time we added partners, Deborah Prosser, Curt Knudsen, and a group of terrific associates. The firm handled business litigation, real estate, and corporate transactions. We were heavily involved in the community. Members were president of the Greater Chambers of Commerce, president of the Inns of Court, and president of the Bar Association. We helped secure the building for the California Museum of Photography and helped build the soccer fields.

The firm merged in 1998, and people went on to new adventures. Bill became general counsel to and partner with Dr. Kali P. Chaudhuri at The KPC Group where he spent the last 28 years.

Bill and I stayed close as I joined Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld to open their west coast office. As Bill was in-house counsel to KPC, I became, what I called "out-house counsel" as KPC became one of the firm's largest clients.

Bill was a generous supporter of UCR. He served on the Business Dean's Advisory Council, the UCRF Board of Trustees and the UCRF Trustee Investment Committee. Bill and Terre established a scholarship in the business school.

Since 2017, I have been teaching Constitutional law and moot court at UCR. In 2021, Bill came to me as he was about to make yet another major contribution to the school. He wanted to support moot court. His donation provided the seed money for UCR to establish a national team and UCR now competes against top universities as part of the American Moot Court Association program.

During the recent Celebration of Life for Bill, Dr. Chaudhuri announced the establishment of the William E.



William E. Thomas

Thomas Endowed Chair in Law and Society specifically to support moot Court at UCR.

When I shared with mutual friends Bill's passing the comments I received were: "Always the smartest guy in the room." "Always took the long view." "It was not that he just wanted to make the deal happen, he wanted to build a relationship so he could do 10 more deals."

But the comment that has resonated with me most came from our friend and colleague who said: "Bill was a blue-chip lawyer."

The blue-chip in poker is the one of highest value. In business the blue-chip company is the one highly respected, known for consistency, reliability, low risk and solid investment. In sports a blue-chip athlete is a "can't miss" talent. The elite player.

Bill was truly a blue-chip lawyer.

Pete Mort, former partner, forever friend.



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# Gideon's Promise in Riverside County: How Public Defenders Make the Constitution Real for 2.4 Million Residents

by Judith Gweon

When the Constitution was ratified in 1788, our Founders guaranteed "due process" and a "fair trial," but they left unanswered the question of how those promises would be honored for people who could not afford a lawyer. For nearly two centuries, indigent defendants navigated the criminal system alone until *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963) transformed American justice by ensuring counsel for all.

Nowhere is *Gideon's* promise more vital than in Riverside County, the tenth-largest county in the nation, home to 2.4 million residents spread across 7,200 square miles. Every day in our courtrooms, deputy public defenders champion the rights of our clients, serving as the constitutionally required safeguard that ensures due process and fair trial are not reserved for the wealthy. As the nation marks the Constitution's 250th anniversary, Riverside County's deputy public defenders bring the Sixth Amendment to life for 80 percent of defendants facing criminal charges in Riverside County.

Clarence Earl Gideon, like many of our clients, was not a legal expert. He was an ordinary man, an eighth-grade dropout with a history of minor offenses, who was accused of breaking into a Florida pool hall. When he asked for an attorney to help him, the court denied his request. Since he could not afford to hire an attorney, Gideon represented himself, was convicted, and was sentenced to five years in prison.

From his prison cell, Gideon wrote a letter in pencil to the United States Supreme Court, stating that his Sixth Amendment right had been violated. The Court agreed. In its unanimous 1963 decision, the Court held that states must provide counsel to all indigent defendants. Gideon's simple handwritten petition reshaped American justice. His case made the right to court appointed counsel a fundamental constitutional guarantee.

In Riverside County, *Gideon's* promise continues through the daily work of our deputy public defenders, defending the most vulnerable defendants with unwavering dedication, empathy, and professionalism. The Law Offices of the Public Defender operate six offices: our main office is in downtown Riverside; the southwest office is in Murrieta; the Coachella Valley office is in Indio; offices in Banning and Blythe; and our Juvenile Court office on County Farm Road is in Riverside. Across these locations, our deputy public defenders protect the rights and dignity of clients facing everything from misdemeanors to serious felonies, including capital cases. Their advocacy ensures that access to justice does not depend on a person's financial means.

Riverside County's public defender also helps reduce recidivism by addressing the underlying root issues that

bring individuals into the justice system. Our Fresh Start Program provides postconviction relief, such as dismissals, case expungements, and helps clients overcome barriers to employment, immigration status, and housing. This embodies *Gideon's* enduring promise: justice must extend beyond conviction.

Through a Holistic Defense Grant from the Office of the State Public Defender, our social workers, paralegals, and attorneys support clients' broader needs, including poverty, mental health, addiction, job training, and housing stability, because true justice recognizes the whole person.

Research consistently shows that deputy public defenders improve outcomes; clients represented by deputy public defenders are less likely to be convicted and to receive shorter sentences. Deputy public defenders bring deep expertise in criminal law, as well as specialized knowledge in mental health court, veterans court, resentencing, conservatorship, and CARE Court.

Yet, like many Public Defender offices nationwide, Riverside County faces growing caseloads and resource challenges, even as the need for our services increases. Despite these pressures, Riverside County's deputy public defenders carry forward the Constitution's promise every day. Our advocacy promotes fairness, strengthens trust in our courts, and ensures that equal justice under the law is not merely an ideal, but a lived reality for the people we serve.

As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Constitution, we celebrate not just the Founders' vision, but the deputy public defenders who make that vision real for millions of Riverside County residents. *Gideon v. Wainwright* was more than a landmark case, but it was a call to ensure equal justice for all, not only for those with means. Riverside County's public defenders are the answer to that call.

The right to counsel is not a luxury. It is a cornerstone of American justice. And *Gideon's* promise lives on each day in the work of Riverside County's deputy public defenders, who stand up for those facing the full power of government, ensuring every person is treated with integrity, compassion, and respect for human dignity.

This article is dedicated to the deputy public defenders of Riverside County, who uphold the Constitution's promise of justice for all, every single day.

*Judith Gweon is the Assistant Public Defender for The Law Offices of the Public Defender, Riverside County and has been with the office for more than 25 years.*



# Interview with First Assistant US Attorney Bill Essayli

by D.W. Duke

Bill Essayli, the First Assistant United States Attorney for the Central District of California, is a man of purpose. He decided to pursue a career in law enforcement at a very young age and has devoted his life to it. Essayli completed his undergraduate studies at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, California, and received his Juris Doctor from Chapman University School of Law in Orange, California.

Mr. Essayli graciously agreed to this interview, which was held at the Ronald Reagan Federal Building in Santa Ana, California, on June 26, 2026.

**Duke:** When did you become interested in law enforcement?

**Essayli:** I was born and raised in Corona, California. I was active in the Police Explorer Program. There were two main events that launched my interest in law enforcement. The first was when I witnessed a bank robbery. When I was 16 or 17 years old, my mother worked at Wells Fargo Bank. One day, while I was visiting the bank, a robbery occurred. I followed the robbers in my car and told the police where they were. They were able to arrest the robbers, who were also wanted for other robberies. My testimony resulted in their convictions. I was able to observe and participate in the prosecution from beginning to end.

**Essayli:** Another event furthered my interest in courts. I was involved in a minor traffic accident where my car tapped the car in front of me. I received two points on my license, which I felt was excessive, so I sued the DMV in a case called *Essayli v. DMV*. I won in the Superior Court, but I was reversed on appeal. This gave me early experience in the courts, and that is when I knew I wanted to become a prosecuting attorney.

**Duke:** How did you begin your career after graduating from law school?

**Essayli:** Initially, I worked at a private law firm, where I developed my legal writing skills. Then I worked in the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, where I developed my trial skills. I served as a member of the California State Assembly from 2022 until 2025. I served as Interim United States Attorney for the Central District of California from April 2025 until July 2025, and I currently serve as First Assistant United States Attorney for the same district.

**Duke:** What are some of the greatest challenges in your office?



Bill Essayli

**Essayli:** One of the biggest challenges we face within the office is a shortage of high-quality junior attorneys. We aren't getting very many applications. The opportunities here are great. So I would encourage any interested attorney to apply.

**Essayli:** In our cases, we face many challenges. Fraud is one of the biggest problems we see. Because it is so rampant, most of the smaller cases go unprosecuted. But the larger cases are diligently pursued. We recently obtained a conviction against a doctor who billed \$270 million in a Medi-Cal fraud scheme. This doctor had been

prosecuted for this before. The federal government gives funds to the state for Medi-Cal, and the state apparently didn't monitor the amount of money he was receiving. The amount he was receiving should have been a red flag. It is hard to track down everyone committing fraud. Internet fraud is also a major problem, especially since fraudsters have become increasingly sophisticated and many are overseas. The best way to fight internet fraud is through education. Informing people what to watch out for.

**Duke:** Election integrity has been in the news lately. Do you believe this is a significant concern in California?

**Essayli:** Election integrity is an issue in California. California's election system doesn't instill voter confidence, and many voters are disenfranchised. No one knows how much voter fraud there is because the system is not designed to detect it. California is refusing to provide access to the voter rolls for our investigation, so we have found it necessary to sue the State of California to obtain access to those rolls.

**Essayli:** California's electoral system makes it very easy to commit voter fraud. California doesn't require voter ID. You can register to vote with nearly any form of ID, even a gym card. Vote-by-mail is another source of fraud. Whether or not a person wants to vote by mail, every eligible voter in California receives a ballot in the mail. California also allows ballot harvesting. This means a person can pick up ballots for others. There is no chain of custody. We recently prosecuted a woman for paying homeless people to register to vote. This is illegal. Because of all of these issues, it is very difficult to prove voter fraud in California.

**Essayli:** Oddly, in recent polls, 84% of the United States population, both Democrats and Republicans, support

voter ID. It is politicians who don't want it. One must ask why that would be true. Apparently, someone is benefiting from it. But voter ID would be the best way to prevent election fraud.

**Duke:** What are some of the other areas that are of particular significance in your work?

**Essayli:** National Security is a major issue for us. This involves criminal organizations, gangs, domestic terrorists, and a wide variety of criminal activities. We recently prosecuted the Turtle Island Liberation Front, a domestic terror organization that was planning to set off bombs across Southern California. And we are prosecuting some of the people who were involved in the plan to carry out a terrorist attack against attendees of the UFC 250 celebration at the White House.

**Essayli:** Another area of concern is child trafficking. It is a serious problem in this country. Often, the traffickers meet the children on the internet and groom them. We recently prosecuted a case where a man was telling a girl he loved her, and he wanted to see her blood. He was asking to meet her. They met at a hotel, and we were able to identify the location. By the time we arrived, he had already cut her. If we hadn't broken into the hotel room, he probably would have killed her. But this is a common problem today.

**Essayli:** Sometimes we must prosecute protesters who go too far and resort to violence. While we support people's right to protest, when they create unsafe conditions for others or interfere with law enforcement, unfortunately, they must be prosecuted.

**Duke:** Thank you, Mr. Essayli. I appreciate the opportunity to learn about your work, and this will be of interest to members of the Riverside County legal community, where you began your career.

**Essayli:** My pleasure. I am pleased to participate in this interview.

For attorneys and members of the public in the Inland Empire, Essayli was a great choice for his position. Those who know him describe him as a person with a solid moral compass who doesn't waver in his pursuit of justice. He remains steadfast in his fair and equitable application of the law. It will be of great interest to see where Essayli's career takes him next. We wish him the best in his future endeavors.

*D.W. Duke is a California trial attorney, author, and CEO of a legal firm and a publishing/motion picture company. A graduate of the University of Michigan and Washington University School of Law, Duke has dedicated his career to civil rights advocacy. He is also the author of nine books and holds a fifth-degree black belt in Taekwondo and a sixth-degree black belt in Jidokwan, conferred by World Taekwondo in Seoul, Korea. Duke can be reached at [duke@duke-law.org](mailto:duke@duke-law.org).*



## Misty A. Perry Isaacson Appointed as Bankruptcy Judge for the Central District of California

Judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit have appointed Misty A. Perry Isaacson as a bankruptcy judge on the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California. Her 14-year term began Thursday, June 25, 2026, when Chief Bankruptcy Judge Julia W. Brand of the Central District administered the oath of office. Judge Perry Isaacson will maintain chambers in Riverside.

"I am delighted to welcome Judge Perry Isaacson to the bankruptcy bench in our Riverside division. Her wealth of experience across all chapters of the bankruptcy code, her history of public service and her dedication to the Riverside community make her a strong addition to the bench," said Judge Brand.

"I am deeply honored by this appointment and am sincerely grateful to my family, friends, colleagues and judges of our Circuit who have supported me throughout my legal career and during this appointment process. Their guidance and encouragement have meant a great deal to me. I look forward to serving the bankruptcy community and the Ninth Circuit with fairness, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to the administration of justice," said Judge Perry Isaacson.

Before her appointment to the bench, Judge Perry Isaacson was an attorney at law since 2010 at Pagter and Perry Isaacson APLC, where her practice focused exclusively on bankruptcy and related litigation, representing debtors, creditors, Chapter 7 and Chapter 13 trustees, the U.S. trustee, and both plaintiffs and defendants in adversary proceedings. Previously, she served as a trial attorney, from 2009 to 2010, in the Office of the U.S. Trustee, Department of Justice, in Riverside, where she was responsible for supervising the administration of bankruptcy cases and the conduct of trustees in cases filed under Chapters 7, 11 and 13.

Judge Perry Isaacson served on the Ninth Circuit's Lawyer Representatives Coordinating Committee as chair, from 2022 to 2023; chair-elect, from 2019 to 2022; and vice chair, from 2018 to 2019. She served as co-chair and as a member of the Ninth Circuit Lawyer Representatives for the Central District of California from 2017 to 2018 and from 2014 to 2018, respectively.

Judge Perry Isaacson graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the California State University, Long Beach, in 1993 and earned her Juris Doctor from the Southwestern University School of Law in 1997.

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California reported 29,591 bankruptcy filings in calendar year 2025, up 14.2% from CY 2024. The court is authorized 21 permanent judgeships.

Judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit have statutory responsibility for selecting and appointing bankruptcy judges in the nine western states that comprise the 9th Circuit. The court uses a comprehensive merit selection process for the initial appointment and for reappointments. Bankruptcy judges serve a 14-year renewable term and handle all bankruptcy-related matters under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.



# Letter from Good Citizenship Award Recipient

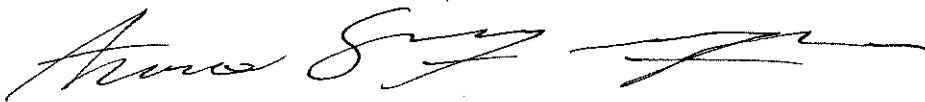
Good day!

I am Alejandro and I was one of the recipients of the 31st Annual Riverside County Bar Association Good Citizenship Award back in 2012. I wanted to thank the foundation for the award that I received many years ago. As a first generation American who grew up in poverty and with a single parent, I never thought I'd really amount to anything, nor did I think the work I put in would ever help anyone. The award has been a core memory that reminds me that no good deed is ever too small and is what drove me to work towards improving every community I become a part of.

A little bit about my story since receiving the award. I graduated UCLA back in 2017 with my Bachelor of Arts in Russian Language and Literature with a Minor in Scandinavian and earned my commission as an Air Force Officer from AFROTC Detachment 055. I completed my technical training as a Nuclear and Missile Operations Officer from Vandenberg SFB and served 7 years at Malmstrom AFB in Montana manning the Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile system. I have recently completed my Master of Science in Nuclear Operations from the Naval Postgraduate School along with my 4th graduate certificate in Systems Engineering Fundamentals. I am now back at Vandenberg forging the next generation of missileers as an instructor/curriculum developer of the 532d Training Squadron.

Your foundation is one of the reasons I have been able to go down a path I am proud of and I would love to pay it forward to the next generation. From the bottom of my heart, thank you and all that serve in your foundation.

Very Respectfully,  
Alejandro



ALEJANDRO S. MOSQUEDA, Capt, USAF  
Curriculum Developer, 532d Training Squadron

## RCB Foundation Good Citizenship Award

One of the most rewarding aspects of our Good Citizenship Award program is seeing the lasting impact it can have on the lives of its recipients. This letter was written by a former award recipient who received the Good Citizenship Award in 2011 while in high school. His heartfelt reflection reminds us that recognition, encouragement, and belief in a young person's potential can make a meaningful difference for years to come. We are pleased to share his letter with you.

# Judicial Profile: Honorable Angela Viramontes

by Betty Fracisco

## United States Magistrate Judge for the Central District of California

Meet Honorable Angela Viramontes, the United States Magistrate Judge for the Central District of California, sworn in on January 20, 2026. Judge Viramontes will preside over matters in Riverside in the Court's Eastern Division. She is no stranger to Riverside, though, because before her appointment as a magistrate judge, Judge Viramontes was the branch chief of the Federal Public Defender's Office in Riverside, serving in that office for more than 16 years.

Judge Viramontes is a native of northern California, specifically the East Bay, where she graduated from Hayward High School after serving in several leadership positions. She continued her education at University of California, Berkeley, graduating with highest honors in sociology and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She worked for a year before returning to the UC Berkeley School of Law, where she interned in a Human Rights Clinic and wrote for the Berkeley Women's Law Journal. Her aspiration at the time was to be an international human rights attorney.

After graduating in 2002 and passing the Bar, Judge Viramontes went to work for Bingham McCutcheon in San Francisco, a civil litigation firm, then moved to Los Angeles, where she was a staff and supervising attorney at the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, representing plaintiffs in class-action litigation in federal court and working on appeals before the Board of Immigration Appeals for two years. She then spent a year at Hirschfeld Liebert Cassidy Whitmore in Los Angeles, primarily representing municipal entities (fire and police departments) and community colleges, then a year in a Los Angeles firm representing employers in employment related lawsuits, including discrimination, wrongful termination, and harassment claims in state and federal courts. After that she returned to the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law for two years, because she really enjoyed the work there.

It was at this point that Judge Viramontes applied for a position with the Federal Public Defender's Office in Riverside, which appealed to her because the office covered Riverside and San Bernardino counties and would involve criminal defense from misdemeanors to capital murder



Honorable Angela Viramontes

and felonies. She represented individuals charged with serious federal offenses, including capital murder, drug trafficking and distribution, and fraud. She also represented individuals charged with crimes that occurred on military bases and federal prisons, including federal possession of firearms, drug distribution, and capital work with a federal nexus, such as murders within a federal prison. As Branch Chief, she served as a member of Riverside's Substance Abuse Treatment and Reentry ("STAR"), and Convention and Sentence Alternatives ("STAR")

In her 16 years with the Federal Public Defender's Programs, she served as branch chief for seven years. Among her notable legal work, Judge Viramontes represented a detainee held at Guantanamo at a habeas proceeding, which required travelling to that location four times, which contributed to her client's eventual release. Now Judge Viramontes is assuming a new demanding position.

The Central District of California now has 24 full-time magistrate judge positions, but due to a decline in funding, hiring hasn't kept up with an increased workload. The Central District of California is comprised of the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo, serving nearly half the population of the State. Judge Viramontes will immediately be preparing initial aspects of defense cases (detention, review search), handle discovery matters in civil cases, and review immigration habeas petitions, working with all judges in the district.

As the Federal Public Defender Branch Chief, Justice Viramontes had been an active member of the Riverside County Bar Association, Inland Empire Chapter. She participated in the Christmas Elves program and the reading program in elementary schools. She had also been an active member and officer of the Federal Bar Association, Inland Empire Chapter, serving as president, vice president, treasurer, and board member. Judge Viramontes is now looking forward to the continued challenges of her new position.

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



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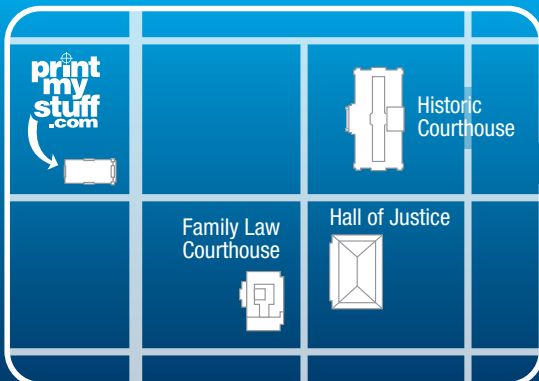
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## Office Space – Ontario

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## Position – Associate Attorney

We welcome applications from both experienced attorneys and motivated new admittees eager to grow. The ideal candidate will demonstrate excellent legal analysis, strong writing skills, and commitment to client advocacy. Our practice includes Family Law, Admin and Civil. Office located in Riverside. Please send resume to: hiring@harperandmccoy.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.



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

**Jaclyn Duque** – Gaudy Law, Upland

**Jeremy Hammond (S)** – City of Palm Springs, Palm Springs

**Han Mac (S)** – Riverside Legal Aid, Riverside

**Nessie M. Moise** – Law Student, San Jacinto

**Jazmin Rojas** – Solo Practitioner, Perris

**Matthew M. Rueda** – Riverside County District Attorney's Office, Riverside

(S) – Designates Law Student Member



### \* ATTENTION RCBA MEMBERS \*

How would you like to receive (or read) the *Riverside Lawyer* magazine?

Some members have told us they prefer reading the online version of the *Riverside Lawyer* (at [www.riversidecountybar.com](http://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](mailto:rcba@riversidecountybar.com)).

## INLAND COUNTIES JUDICIAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

This program was developed to assist all attorneys applying, or interested in applying, for a Superior Court judicial position. The program will assist in the development of a qualified and more diverse judicial applicant pool. This program is designed to identify, encourage, and provide mentors for all individuals considering a judicial career. One primary goal of the program is to convey to the legal community the uniform message of Governor Newsom's commitment to appointing a highly capable bench reflective of the rich diversity of our state.

To apply to the program, fill out the Judicial Mentor application at:

<https://forms.riverside.courts.ca.gov/Forms/JudicialMentorApplication>

For additional information, go to Riverside Superior Court website or email: [JudicialMentor@riverside.courts.ca.gov](mailto:JudicialMentor@riverside.courts.ca.gov)

# CALENDAR

## JULY

- 28** Joint Employment Law/Civil Litigation  
Sections Meeting  
Noon, Zoom  
Speakers – Neil D. Okazaki and Arti L. Bhimani  
Topic: "Do It Right or Defend It Later: Workplace Investigations That Hold Up in Litigation."  
MCLE

## AUGUST

- 20** Project Graduate Mixer  
5:30 p.m.  
ProAbition  
3597 Main Street, Riverside
- 21** General Membership Meeting  
Noon, RCBA Gabbert Gallery  
Speaker: Virginia Blumenthal, Esq.  
Topic: "From Mini Skirts to Briefs"  
Riverside history of women in law.

### SAVE THE DATE

#### RCBA INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS DINNER

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Social Hour 5:30 p.m., Dinner 6:30 p.m.

Mission Inn

3649 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside

### Events Subject To Change

For the latest calendar information please visit the RCBA's website at [riversidecountybar.com](http://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 6<sup>th</sup> 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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