



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Supreme Court Makes Appointments to the Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions

Supreme Court appoints Justice Haller, Presiding Judge Trentacosta, and Commissioner Richards, and reappoints Judge Garcia and Judge O'Donnell

SAN FRANCISCO—The California Supreme Court today announced the appointment of three new members to fill vacancies on the Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO), an independent committee appointed by the court to help inform the judiciary and the public concerning judicial ethics topics. The committee was established by the Supreme Court as part of its constitutional responsibility to guide the conduct of judges and judicial candidates (Cal. Const., art. VI, § 18, subd. (m)).

The newly appointed CJEO members are Justice Judith L. Haller of the Fourth Appellate District, Division One (four-year term), Presiding Judge Robert J. Trentacosta of the San Diego County Superior Court (three-year term), and Commissioner Lowell E. Richards of the Contra Costa County Superior Court (one-year term). The court also announced the reappointment of two current CJEO members. Judge Michael Garcia (Ret.) of the Sacramento County Superior Court and Judge Joanne B. O'Donnell of the Los Angeles County Superior Court will serve additional four-year terms.

In making appointments to serve on the CJEO, the Supreme Court selects members of the bench with a strong background in judicial ethics, experience as presiding judge, extensive courtroom experience, and service in courts of various sizes throughout the state. The three new members of the committee are exceptionally-experienced judicial officers.

Justice Judith L. Haller of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division One, is a judicial recipient of the Bernard E. Witkin, Esq., Award, presented for civic leadership and excellence in the teaching, practice, enactment, and adjudication of the law. She is also a former chair and vice-chair of the California Judges Association Ethics Committee. Justice Haller has been awarded the Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award by the California Women Lawyers for her excellence as a jurist, commitment to gender equity and the elimination of gender bias in the legal profession, and for her service to women lawyers.

Judge Robert J. Trentacosta is the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of San Diego County. He is currently the vice-chair of the Judicial Council's Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee and a member of the Judicial Council's Court Facilities Working Group and the Curriculum Committee for the annual Supervising Judges Institute, where he also serves as an instructor. Presiding Judge Trentacosta formerly chaired the California Judges Association's Judicial Ethics Committee.

Commissioner Lowell E. Richards serves on the Superior Court of Contra Costa County and has been a seminar leader, technical advisor, and faculty member for the Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER) at New Judge Orientation and the B.E. Witkin Judicial College of California. He currently serves on the CJER Science & Law Education Committee and has been faculty for CJER educational programs in judicial ethics, commissioner issues, judicial demeanor for pro tems, traffic, small claims, consumer law, foreclosure, unlawful detainers, computer technology, domestic violence, e-discovery, electronic evidence, and limited jurisdiction.

The CJEO is authorized by the Supreme Court to provide judicial ethics advisory opinions and advice for the benefit of the judiciary and the public (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.80(a)). The committee publishes formal opinions, issues confidential informal opinions, and provides oral advice on proper judicial conduct pursuant to the California Code of Judicial Ethics and other authorities (rule 9.80(e)(1)). The CJEO acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and all other entities (rule 9.80(b)).

The Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions members are: Justice Ronald B. Robie of the Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District (chair); Justice Douglas P. Miller of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two (vice-chair); Justice Maria Rivera of the Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division Four; Justice Judith L. Haller of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division One; Presiding Judge Suzanne N. Kingsbury of the Superior Court of El Dorado County; Presiding Judge Robert J. Trentacosta of the Superior Court of San Diego County; Judge Kenneth K. So of the Superior Court of San Diego County; Judge Michael Garcia (Ret.) of the Superior Court of Sacramento County; Judge Joanne B. O'Donnell of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County; Judge George J. Abdallah, Jr. of the Superior Court of San Joaquin County; Judge John S. Wiley, Jr. of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County; and Commissioner Lowell E. Richards of the Superior Court of Contra Costa County.

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