

Superior Court of California County of Santa Clara

CONTACT

BENJAMIN T. RADA

Communications Program Manager

brada@scscourt.org

(408) 334-9236



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 3, 2021

Santa Clara County Superior Court Judicial Mentorship Program

The program seeks to identify, encourage, and offer mentorship for individuals considering a judicial career.

In collaboration with the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom and Judicial Appointments Secretary Luis Céspedes, the Santa Clara County Superior Court and the Equality and Social Justice Committee have established a program to identify, encourage, and offer mentorship for individuals considering a judicial career.

“The Santa Clara County Superior Court Bench has long exemplified diversity and inclusion. From as far back as Clara Shortridge Foltz passing the bar in San Jose in the 1870s, to the appointments of Hon. Maurice Hardeman in the 1950s and Hon. LaDoris Cordell in the 1980s, to achieving gender parity on the Bench in the 2000s, our Court espouses the philosophy that the Bench should be representative of our community – both of and for the people,” said Presiding Judge Theodore C. Zayner.

This program aims to assist in the recruitment and development of a qualified, inclusive, and diverse judicial applicant pool. Similar programs have been established in counties across the state to assist and support Governor Newsom’s ongoing commitment to appointing a Bench reflective of California’s rich diversity.

“The judiciary serves the public, and enhancing diversity of our profession fosters public confidence in our justice system. It is imperative to demonstrate to all who enter our courts - whether as litigants, witnesses, or jurors - that our Courts are inclusive and justice is administered by individuals who share backgrounds and experiences similar to theirs,” said Hon. Nahal Iravani-Sani, co-chair of the Equality and Social Justice Recruitment Committee. “To that end, the Court’s Equality and Social Justice Committee, aligned with the Governor’s Judicial Mentorship Program, seeks to recruit and mentor qualified candidates reflective of the communities we serve.”

The Santa Clara County Superior Court’s effort is two-fold, consisting of a one-on-one mentor program and a community outreach/recruitment component.

Mentor Program

The Presiding Judge or a designee will appoint a formal panel of mentor judges available to anyone seeking guidance in applying to the Bench and assist in demystifying the application and vetting process.

Interested individuals can contact the Court by submitting a form/application to receive information on the next steps. Participants are paired with a mentor judge who will discuss the prospective applicant's career objectives, answer questions regarding the application and vetting process, and assist in providing input as the candidate completes the judicial application. Mentorship is available to judicial candidates applying for an appointment to the Bench as well as for individuals pursuing election of an open Bench seat.

Participation in the mentor program does not guarantee an appointment

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee works with all sectors of the legal community, including bar associations, public interest organizations, government attorneys, private law firms, and solo practitioners. This dedicated outreach effort informs members of the legal community of the judicial mentorship program, disseminates consistent information regarding the Governor's judicial criteria, and identifies and encourages individuals to assist in recruiting possible candidates for the Bench.

The Mentor Committee will coordinate with bar organizations that already have judicial recruitment programs. Affinity bar leaders have stated their desire to work with the Court on this issue. The program is not intended to supplant existing bar programs but to complement these efforts by providing bar associations with current insight into the Governor's judicial qualifications and priorities.

Co-chair of the Equality and Social Justice Recruitment Committee, Hon. Sunil Kulkarni stated, "The Court is committed to making sure our lofty goals concerning diversity and inclusivity are matched with actions. We have developed two different, but complementary, programs. The first is our judicial mentoring program, where experienced attorneys interested in becoming judges are paired with current judges. Our judges will help attorneys navigate the somewhat-complicated application process (or the election process, if the attorneys are considering running for election to an open bench seat). The second is our community outreach program, where current judges - from many different backgrounds - will reach out to the broader Santa Clara County legal community, including bar associations, public interest organizations, government attorneys, private law firms, and solo practitioners. That outreach focuses on informing attorneys about the mentoring program and encouraging qualified individuals to consider becoming judges."

The Court's Judicial Mentorship Program website will be available for applications beginning in December 2021.