

Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles

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NEWS RELEASE



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PRESIDING JUDGE-ELECT ERIC C. TAYLOR: SAFELY RESTORING ACCESS TO JUSTICE REMAINS TOP PRIORITY IN NATION'S LARGEST TRIAL COURT

As Presiding Judge-Elect Eric C. Taylor prepares to lead the nation's largest trial court amid pandemic-related challenges, restoring access to justice safely and more widely are chief priorities during his upcoming 2-year term.

"The Court is focused on a safe expansion of access to justice after a 6-month hiatus of Criminal and Civil trials and non-essential matters," Presiding Judge-Elect Taylor said. "Restoring access to justice is complicated by the pandemic-related state budget crisis. I am focused on leading the Superior Court of Los Angeles County with a commitment to restore safe access to justice while achieving a fair allocation of state funding to support the magnitude of our Court's fundamental and essential functions."

Elected unanimously earlier this month by the Los Angeles County bench, Judge Taylor has served as the Assistant Presiding Judge since January 1, 2019. His 2-year term as Presiding Judge begins January 1, 2021.

"I want to thank my friend and colleague, Presiding Judge Kevin C. Brazile, for his extraordinary leadership as we faced the swift, devastating impacts of COVID-19 that erupted in March 2020 in Los Angeles County," Judge Taylor said. "It has been an honor to assist Presiding Judge Brazile as he tirelessly and courageously made decisions to lead our Court safely through this truly unprecedented crisis. Every decision he made was prioritized around protecting the public health and safety of all who use and work in our courts."

Since March 2020, Judges Brazile and Taylor methodically sought and obtained the authority from Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye to extend statutory deadlines while prioritizing emergency and essential matters to limit the number of people in the county's 38 courthouses. Beginning in late June, they led the gradual, phased resumption of court services and hearings with social distancing protocols, enhanced sanitization of high-touch areas in courthouses, and a mandatory mask requirement.

"I intend to build on our restoration of services with strategies designed to withstand further waves of COVID-19 as we enter into the pandemic's second year," Judge Taylor said. "We are fortunate in Los Angeles County that we have brilliant, creative and resilient jurists supported by our dedicated staff led by Executive Officer/Clerk of Court Sherri R. Carter."

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JUDGE TAYLOR
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Together we have guided the Court through this crisis with rapid deployment of remote courtroom appearance technology in nearly 600 courtrooms while providing remote Clerk's Office services to reduce courthouse traffic."

Judge Taylor, along with his team of judicial leaders, will continue to restore access to justice in a way that will foster confidence in a justice system that always elevates public health and safety while seeking to overcome the significant COVID-19 case backlogs and delays.

"We must now look toward the next phases of resuming jury trials and other matters safely and more widely throughout the county," Judge Taylor said. "I am grateful to our essential court employees and bench officers who have served the public during the ongoing tumult of the past six months. I will rely on their expertise and ongoing commitment to help me solve these vexing challenges."

Because of the \$167.8 million cut to state trial court funding in the current fiscal year plus annual cost increases, the Court had to close more than a \$60 million deficit in its Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget through spending reductions and by exhausting all available reserves.

"We will do everything we can to restore our budget so as not to further impair court operations at a time when people need justice the most," Judge Taylor said. "We are acutely aware of the pain so many are enduring during this pandemic. A healthy society and economy depend on a healthy court system. I grew up in the Crenshaw District in Los Angeles, in a single-parent, small-apartment household, with very limited resources. I remember well the stresses on our family, and especially on my mother. I know that but for the courts, the most vulnerable among us would have no forum in which to pursue legal protections, equal rights and simply a place to be heard."

As Assistant Presiding Judge, Judge Taylor's service to the people of Los Angeles County also has focused on mentoring at-risk youth. He worked to develop a mentoring program with LA Unified and Good City Mentors in local public schools to connect numerous bench officers with at-risk students.

"Involving the community as partners in our legal system, especially young people, is a wonderful way to build trust and to positively influence future social justice," Judge Taylor said.

Recognizing the integral role of the county's justice partners, Judge Taylor looks forward to working collaboratively with these dedicated attorneys and officials in the next two years.

"I am honored to serve the people of Los Angeles County alongside the other dedicated elected officials and justice partners who work every day to help those people who rely on us for fair, equal—and safe—access to justice," he said.

The Superior Court of Los Angeles County has 550 judicial officers and more than 4,600 employees serving a diverse population of more than 10 million people. The largest trial court in the nation, the Court has 38 courthouses in 12 judicial districts located throughout the county's 4,752 square miles.

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