

Superior Court of California,  
County of Los Angeles  
Media Relations  
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# NEWS RELEASE

Diversity Inclusion Working Group

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**August 17, 2021**

## **PRESIDING JUDGE ERIC C. TAYLOR APPOINTS DIVERSITY INCLUSION WORKING GROUP TO REACH OUT TO LA COUNTY ATTORNEYS TO HELP THEM OVERCOME BARRIERS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION**

***LA Judges Approve Significant Local Rules Changes to Permit Judicial  
Discretion in Allowing Less Experienced Attorneys to Argue Motions Jointly  
with Co-Counsel***

***Judicial Committee, in Close Collaboration with Pro Bono and Bar Associations,  
Announces Upcoming Events, Services to Support Attorneys and Help Them  
Advance in Their Legal Careers***

Under the leadership and direction of Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor, the nation's largest trial court is proud to announce a comprehensive diversity and inclusion collaboration with legal aid and bar associations to support underrepresented attorneys gain valuable litigation and courtroom experience.

Chaired by Presiding Judge Taylor and Judge Ruth Ann Kwan, the Diversity Inclusion Working Group includes judges Robert Broadbelt III, Kristin S. Escalante, Deirdre Hill, Yvette M. Palazuelos, Yolanda Orozco, Zaven V. Sinanian, Michael Whitaker, and Helen Zukin. The group is collaborating with legal aid and bar groups on effective outreach opportunities and trainings for less experienced and underrepresented attorneys in LA County.

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“Very soon, the new and next generation of lawyers in Los Angeles County, will have some of the best and brightest legal mentors and courtroom experiences available to them,” said California Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye. “Thanks to the new Diversity Inclusion Working Group, chaired by Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Judge Eric Taylor and Judge Ruth Ann Kwan with many other distinguished judges of that court, in partnership with legal aid and bar associations, this innovative program will provide outreach and opportunities for professional success in the law. I commend all of the judges and lawyers who made this possible, and for striving to make the justice system even more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.”

Presiding Judge Taylor thanked the Chief Justice for her support and added, “I am proud of this creative, committed group of judges who have pledged their time and expertise to work with other legal aid and bar partners to offer programs and opportunities to develop attorneys who face barriers in their legal careers because of their race, sex, gender or sexual identity, disability, religion – or any other reason. Our diverse bench is motivated to lead this unique, all-inclusive effort to help attorneys who face challenges finding opportunities to gain the experience and skills they need to lift them along their career paths. Every accomplished attorney or experienced judge benefited in their legal career at the hand of influential attorney mentors who helped develop and guide them toward achievement. That internal gratitude drives us now to work with our partners to support the next generation of attorneys.”

Deborah Chang, the current President of the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) and the Consumer Attorneys of California (CAOC), also stressed the importance of this collaboration, stating, “Diversity in our courtrooms is essential to the success of our legal profession. Our jurors in Los Angeles deserve to see and hear from lawyers who are as diverse as they are – and we can lead the country by inspiring future generations of lawyers who represent every facet of our society – and to more fairly include women, people of color, and all others who reflect underrepresented groups to find their places at counsel tables in our courtrooms.”

Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles (CAALA) President Genie Harrison said, “Diversity, equity, and inclusion are key commitments for CAALA. We are proud to join with the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, ABOTA, ABTL, ASCDC, and LACBA, to offer inexperienced

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and underrepresented attorneys the opportunity to gain litigation and courtroom experience from our trial bar leaders.”

“ASCDC is thrilled to be a part of such a dynamic and progressive diversity and inclusion initiative,” Association of Southern California Defense Counsel (ASCDC) President Diana Lytel said. “We commend Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor, Judge Ruth Ann Kwan and this dynamic working group for creating these programs which will be instrumental in creating opportunities for underrepresented and less experienced attorneys in Los Angeles County. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we all play a role in promoting inclusion which works to ensure fairness and equity under the law. Our courtrooms should reflect California’s rich and varied demographics and these programs work toward achieving this goal.”

Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA) President Brad Pauley stated, “LACBA applauds the Superior Court of Los Angeles County’s Diversity Inclusion Working Group initiatives. These initiatives will do much to address the challenges faced by lawyers from traditionally underrepresented communities as well as those lawyers who’ve not had the good fortune and opportunity to grow and advance in our profession. At the same time, they will further our shared goal of mentoring newer lawyers, who are the profession’s future. And these initiatives also will provide an important conduit for lawyers seeking to fulfill their professional obligation to provide pro bono services to those in need. LACBA looks forward to working with the Court and other local bar associations to make these initiatives a success.”

Susan K. Leader, President of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers (ABTL) – Los Angeles, added, “The rule change presents a tremendous opportunity for partners at big law firms to provide less experienced attorneys with the platform necessary to develop oral advocacy skills in court, while providing clients with the comfort of knowing that their experienced counsel they’ve retained continue to manage and train others to ensure the highest caliber of legal representation.”

**Rules Changes Support the Working Group’s Objectives**

*New Local Rule 3.47 Multiple Counsel – Motions and amended Local Rule 3.93 Multiple Counsel – Trial Functions* will take effect on January 1, 2022. These rules changes are the vehicles giving

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judges the discretion to grant requests by counsel to permit less experienced attorneys the opportunity to perform trial functions or argue motions alongside a supervising attorney.

To coincide with these rule changes, the working group has organized trainings and programs, along with legal aid organizations and bar associations, for inexperienced and underrepresented attorneys in the Los Angeles County legal community.

“We are looking forward to working with many other significant justice partners like Public Counsel that have volunteered for future projects,” Presiding Judge Taylor said.

### **Pro Bono Litigation Opportunities Forum**

“Help Others While Helping Yourself”

Learn about and explore pro bono opportunities to gain courtroom experience while volunteering to help litigants who cannot afford legal representation in their civil cases.

**When:** September 14, 2021

5-5:30 p.m. – Sign-In & Reception

5:30-7 p.m. – Program

**Where:** Remote & In-Person Program\*

Stanley Mosk Courthouse

Panorama Café, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor

111 N. Hill St.

Los Angeles, CA

[Register here online](#) ahead of the event and watch for more information and program details.

\*In-Person/Virtual Program subject to change depending on Los Angeles County Department of Public Health guidance.

### **Implicit Bias Program**

Sponsored by CAALA and ASCDC with participation from the Court, this online seminar will provide insightful, practical strategies for self-identifying bias and best practices for assuring equity and inclusion in your practice and conduct. Watch for more details.

### **Litigation and Trial Skills Series**

An ongoing educational series of lectures; mini seminars; and taped trainings and demonstrations, made available for free on the Court’s website, on various trial skills topics. Watch for more details.

The Diversity Inclusion Working Group will continue its long-term work alongside the Court’s standing Diversity & Inclusion Committee, chaired by Judge Orozco.

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