



Media Relations

publicinfo@lacourt.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 2, 2024**

Superior Court of Los Angeles County Bench Elects Judge Sergio C. Tapia II as Presiding Judge and Judge Ricardo Ocampo as Assistant Presiding Judge For 2025-26 Term

The judges of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County have elected Judge Sergio C. Tapia II as the Presiding Judge and Judge Ricardo Ocampo as the Assistant Presiding Judge for the 2025-26 term beginning January 1, 2025. Presiding Judge-Elect Tapia will become the first Presiding Judge of Latino heritage elected by all the judges of the consolidated Superior Court since trial court unification in 2000, while Assistant Presiding Judge-elect Ocampo will be the first Asian American in the Court's history to serve as Assistant Presiding Judge.

Presiding Judge-Elect Tapia has served as the Court's Assistant Presiding Judge since January 1, 2023, after being elected by his colleagues in October of 2022. He will now officially succeed current Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner, whose two-year term as the Presiding Judge concludes on December 31, 2024.

"I am humbled and deeply grateful to have been elected by my judicial colleagues as the next Presiding Judge of the largest trial court in the nation," said Presiding Judge-Elect Tapia. "I am especially eager to build upon the solid foundation established by Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner, beside whom I've served as the Assistant Presiding Judge with honor since 2023. Presiding Judge Jessner has exemplified principled, courageous and empathetic leadership throughout her tenure, redefining the principles of judicial leadership and inspiring us all. I am committed to building on her legacy and ensuring that our Court remains a model of innovation and excellence for trial courts nationwide."

Assistant Presiding Judge-Elect Ocampo has served as the Court's Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division since January 1, 2023. As Assistant Presiding Judge, Judge Ocampo will assist Presiding Judge-Elect Tapia in the Court's administration and will play a key part in shaping policies that affect the largest consolidated trial court system in the nation.

"I am deeply honored to have been chosen by my colleagues as the Court's next Assistant Presiding Judge," said Assistant Presiding Judge-Elect Ocampo. "I look forward to working with Presiding Judge-Elect Tapia and the entire bench to ensure that our Court continues to serve the people of Los Angeles County with fairness,

efficiency and compassion. I would also like to thank Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner and Presiding Judge-Elect Tapia, whose leadership of our Court over the past 21 months has set a high standard for judicial administration and reflects an unwavering dedication to ensuring access to justice for all Los Angeles County residents.”

ABOUT PRESIDING JUDGE-ELECT SERGIO C. TAPIA II

Appointed to the bench in 2013 by Governor Jerry Brown, Presiding Judge-Elect Tapia has held several pivotal leadership positions within the Court. These include his current role as Assistant Presiding Judge (2023 - present), Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division, Assistant Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division and Assistant Supervising Judge of Limited Criminal (Traffic). His commitment to the Court’s mission of providing fair and timely access to justice extends beyond his judicial leadership roles, as evidenced by his service on numerous Court committees, including but not limited to the Court’s Executive Committee, Budget Committee, Facilities Committee, Community Outreach Committee, and as a founding member of the Court’s Judicial Mentor Program.

Judge Tapia's influence reaches beyond the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. He has been an active member of several Judicial Council of California committees, including the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness, the Court Facilities Advisory Committee, the Traffic Advisory Committee, the Futures Traffic Working Group and the Judicial Diversity Tool Kit Working Group. He currently serves on Governor Gavin Newsom's Judicial Selection Advisory Committee and is deeply committed to ensuring that the bench reflects the diversity of the people the judiciary serves in Los Angeles County.

Before his appointment to the bench, Judge Tapia’s legal career was marked by a commitment to public service. He began his career with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, providing free legal assistance to self-represented litigants. He then joined the Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Office as a Deputy Public Defender, and later the Alternate Public Defender’s Office as a Deputy Alternate Public Defender before his appointment to the bench.

Beyond his judicial duties, Judge Tapia is committed to nurturing future legal professionals. He has served as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Glendale University College of Law and has volunteered as a Teen Court Judge at Bell Gardens High School, at the Constitutional Rights Foundation and as a mentor for College Bound Today.

Judge Tapia has been an active member of several professional associations. He has served on the Executive Board of the California Judges’ Association, as Chair of the Latino Judicial Officers’ Association and as President of the California Latino Judges' Association. As an attorney, he also served on the Mexican American Bar Association Board of Trustees and on the Board of Directors for California Rural Legal Assistance.

Born in Hawthorne, California, to Mexican immigrant parents and raised in Bell Gardens, Judge Tapia was the first in his family to graduate from college. He earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in Ethnic Studies and Political

Science from the University of California, Berkeley and a law degree from the University of Iowa, College of Law. He is fluent in Spanish, which further enhances his connection to the diverse community he serves.

ABOUT ASSISTANT PRESIDING JUDGE-ELECT RICARDO OCAMPO

Judge Ocampo's career spans nearly three decades of dedicated service to the Los Angeles County legal system. Appointed to the bench by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in October 2008, Judge Ocampo has served in various leadership roles for the Court, including as Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division and Supervising and Assistant Supervising Judge of the Court's South Central District, in the city of Compton.

Before his appointment to the bench, Judge Ocampo served as a Deputy District Attorney for the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, where he served in the Major Crimes Division, the Public Integrity Division, the Hardcore Gang Division and the Sex Crimes and Domestic Violence Unit. Prior to joining the District Attorney's Office, Judge Ocampo began his legal career as a research attorney for the Superior Court of Los Angeles County.

Judge Ocampo holds a Juris Doctorate from Southwestern University School of Law. He also earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in International Business Management from San Francisco State University.

Adding to his many attributes that will enable him to ably serve Los Angeles County's diverse population, Judge Ocampo is fluent in Filipino and Spanish.

For more information on the Court's current programs and services, follow the Court on X ([@LASuperiorCourt](#)), Instagram ([@LASuperiorCourt](#)), Threads ([@LASuperiorCourt](#)), or visit the Court's website, www.LACourt.org.