

District 14 News, NAWJ

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Submitted by the Honorable Pennie K. McLaughlin, District Director

**SAN DIEGO SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE TAMILA E. IPEMA TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME**



For the second year in a row, a San Diego Superior Court Judge and NAWJ past Board member will be inducted into the San Diego County Hall of Fame. Last year, Superior Court Judge Randa Trapp received the honor of Trailblazer and we are so delighted to report that Judge Tamila E. Ipema was this year's winner of this prestigious award. The Trailblazer award is given to a single female in the entire county for "Women who were first in their fields or whose individual accomplishments paved the way for other women." Judge Ipema is known to many throughout the judiciary in the United States and abroad after serving as NAWJ's President in 2018-19, and helped the NAWJ make progress in its goal to provide equal access to justice for all.

Judge Ipema was born in Tehran, Iran and left Iran in 1978 to escape the country's political turmoil. She has devoted her work to advance the rights of all people, and has helped diversity our own San Diego bench. San Diego Attorney Arezoo Jamshidi put it best:

"To say that Judge Ipema's service improves the status of women and promotes equality is an understatement. She works tirelessly advancing equal access to justice for all, creating pipeline programs for judicial diversity, and helping women, children and other vulnerable populations in San Diego, and internationally. Judge Ipema's passion for human rights is, in part, born from her experiences growing up in Iran. Instead of surrendering to these inequities, at a young age, Judge Ipema decided she would defend civil and human rights and stand up for justice at all costs—and she has spent her career doing just that."

Judge Ipema is the first Iranian-American Judge to be appointed to the position of Judge of the California Superior Court in San Diego. Her accolades and recognition for excellence could fill a volume, and we are proud of our esteemed District 14 member and that once again, her selfless work is recognized with this 2022 Trailblazer award.

**OUR MEMBERS CONTINUE TO BE A PART OF IMPORTANT PANELS:**

Judge Marguerite Downing, Los Angeles Superior Court, will be a part of a special panel to celebrate Black History Month along with NAWJ member Judge Patricia Titus and Judge Erithe Smith. The presentation is called “Celebrating Women Jurist” at the University of West Los Angeles School of Law (Judge Downing’s alma mater) on February 24<sup>th</sup>. It is important to note another honor bestowed upon Judge Titus, as she was recently inducted into the John M. Langston Bar Association’s Hall of Fame for the outstanding impact and positive influence she has had in the legal profession and the community for over 35 years.



Judge Marguerite Downing



Judge Patricia Titus

Judge Downing will also be an integral part of two programs on children of incarcerated parents. The first will be at the 2022 NCJFCJ National Conference on Juvenile Justice on March 14, 2022 in Pittsburgh. On April 8, 2022 in McLean, VA, Judge Downing will be part of a panel on the same program at the ABA National Parent Representation Conference in conjunction with the ABA Children in the Law Conference.

It is important to note that Judge Downing has chaired the Incarcerated Parents Working Group for Los Angeles County at Edelman Children’s Court which was established to address barriers affecting incarcerated parents seeking to reunify with their children in foster care. Her expertise and knowledge in this area is extensive.



Commissioner Nadia Keilani



Judge Najla Ayoubi, Ret.



Judge Vida Qayoumi

San Diego Superior Court Commissioner Nadia Keilani, who also serves as the Co-Chair of the NAWJ Fairness and Access Committee, will moderate a panel entitled: “Empowering Our Voices: Perspectives from Afghan Women Judges on February 27, 2022 in a collaborative event with the NAWJ and Women of Color in Law. The panelists are Judge Vida Qayoumi and Judge Najla Ayoubi. Judge Qayoumi serves as a Legal Advisor in the Afghan Women’s Network and is an Assistant Professor at Kabul University. Judge Ayoubi was the 215 recipient of the Women Peacemaker award at the USD Joan Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. In addition, she serves as the Chief of Coalition and Global Programs at Every Woman Treaty.

### **District 14 CA Commissioners Run for Open Judge Seats in California**

by Commissioner Pennie K. McLaughlin, San Diego Superior Court



Comm. Erin Childs, San Luis Obispo, CA



Comm. Myrllys Stockdale Coleman, Sacramento



Comm. Pennie McLaughlin, San Diego

It is not every day that you learn, after taking the jump and filing for election, that two of your colleagues and friends in counties spread out around our large State, have done the same. This year, myself in San Diego, Commissioner Erin Childs, San Luis Obispo County (middle of the State), and Commissioner Myrllys Stockdale Coleman, Sacramento County (northern CA) all independently, filed for open seats on our respective courts to make the transition to a judge after wearing robes as Commissioners for years. Also unknown to us, each of our campaigns has

ace Campaign Consultant Jennifer Tierney at the helm. *“Women commissioners make compelling judicial candidates. With the training and experience of judicial officers combined with the often thoughtful, community driven campaigns that women run, women commissioners give voters an excellent choice for Judge,”* commented Ms. Tierney.

Both Erin and myself will not face registered opponents on our ballots in the coming primary elections. Myrllys does have a challenger in her large county, and will be working hard every day to reach the goal of a judicial seat. Commissioner Stockdale Coleman shared, *“becoming a judge has been a goal of mine for a while, but when I learned of the rare opportunity of the open seat, I quickly made the decision to run. Many have said this was a courageous decision. I would agree -- if you use my definition of courage: it is not the absence of fear, but rather, it is fear, walking. I asked myself, if not now, then when? My life journey has prepared me for this very moment, and the courage that this moment requires.”*

Commissioner Childs was equally circumspect about this momentous decision to run, and noted *“I never thought, in a million years, that I would run for office. It was terrifyingly far out of my comfort zone. But after the encouragement of my friends and colleagues, I decided to go for it. Getting out there, meeting people while educating the public on the judiciary is the most fun I’ve had in a very long time.”*

As for myself, after learning that our dear friend, colleague and past-president of the NAWJ, Judge Tamila E. Ipema, would not seek re-election to her seat, I thought about the incredible possibility of taking Tamila’s seat and the honor that I would feel to hold her very seat on our bench. The hesitation lasted less than a single night, and I began the potentially daunting task of reaching many of the 1.3 million eligible voters in San Diego County for the primary election in June. Luckily, I am unopposed, and will begin this term as of January 2, 2023. Tamila will be moving on to her next journey of traveling the world with her husband, a former Immigration Judge, and working for the advancement of human rights. Judge Ipema will be featured in our newsletter in the coming months as she readies herself for this transition. Thus begins my own journey at this next level as judge, but it is bittersweet to lose such an important member of our bench who exemplifies so much of what we all aspire to emulate.

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**

District 14 welcomes our newest members, San Diego Superior Court Commissioners Chandra Reid and Deborah Cumba. We are excited to have them join our local efforts in San Diego and look forward to their participation in our many committees.



Comm. Chandra Reid



Comm. Deborah Cumba



Dr. Joan B. Kessler

We also welcome new member Joan B. Kessler, Esq., Ph.D., who brings over 15 years' experience as an ADR professional and a Ph.D. in communications to her mediation and arbitration practice at JAMS in Los Angeles, CA.