

Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye

During her 10 years in office, Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye has emerged as one of the country's leading advocates for equal access to justice, civic education, and reform of court funding models and procedures that unfairly impact the poor.

When she was sworn into office in January 2011 as the 28th Chief Justice of California, she was the first Asian-Filipina American and the second woman to serve as the state's chief justice.

In recent years, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye has raised awareness of the unfair financial impact of fines, fees, and the bail system on the poor. She is a leading national advocate calling for bail system reform by addressing concerns about fairness and public safety.

As leader of California's judicial branch and chair of the Judicial Council, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye has led the judicial branch out of the state's worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression. She has improved the branch's efficiency, accountability, and transparency in how it conducts business, sets policy, and discloses information. When she became Chief Justice, she opened meetings of the Judicial Council and its advisory bodies that were once closed to the public. Judicial Council meetings are now webcast, as are state Supreme Court oral arguments. She initiated a review and oversaw changes in court rules that will improve how judicial branch entities prevent and address harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and inappropriate workplace conduct. During the COVID-19 pandemic she pushed for remote court operations and issued hundreds of emergency orders so that courts continue to operate safely. She also launched a program to make retired judges available to fast track the resolution of some criminal cases.

She has been recognized for her early work on domestic violence issues, support for minority bar associations, and for advancing the role of women and minorities in the legal profession. The Chief Justice is a leader in revitalizing civic learning through her Power of Democracy initiative. She, along with other state leaders, fulfilled one of the initiative's goals in July 2016 when the state Board of Education unanimously approved an instructional framework that encourages civic learning. In 2019, she was honored with the Sandra Day O'Connor Award by the National Center for State Courts for her work inspiring, promoting, and improving civics education.

The Chief Justice has also convened leaders to address such issues as implicit bias, human trafficking, and truancy. All the Chief Justice's initiatives support her vision for a judicial branch that provides physical access through safe and secure courthouses, remote access through technology initiatives, and equal access for all Californians.