

Honorable Pennie K. McLaughlin Judge, San Diego County Superior Court



After over 18 years as a Superior Court Commissioner in San Diego, CA, Judge McLaughlin was appointed as a Judge in August 2023, after running unopposed for the seat previously held by Judge Tamila Ipema. Judge McLaughlin currently sits in a family law assignment for the San Diego Superior Court. Her past assignments include the high-volume child support court, misdemeanor arraignments, felony drug court, traffic, small claims and unlawful detainers. Judge McLaughlin has a keen awareness of the hardships faced by many of the litigants who come before her on a daily basis. As a new lawyer and graduate of Boston University School of Law, Ms.

McLaughlin traveled across the country to become a deputy public defender in one of the largest and finest offices in the United States. She was determined to seek justice on behalf of indigent defendants and spent 13 years doing this work.

After handling virtually every type of criminal case, Judge McLaughlin served for four years as an Assistant United States Attorney in San Diego and was known as a prosecutor with a honed sense of justice, fairness, and equity. Judge McLaughlin has always been active in her community and served as her local community's governing body's president for many years. During this time, she also edited the community newsletter and transformed it into a publication that went to every household in the neighborhood and included articles on restaurants, shops, residents and opportunities to become involved. This community, Bird Rock, La Jolla, was transformed in these years by a very active group of citizens who collectively made the difference working together.

Through the NAWJ, Judge McLaughlin is currently serving as the District 14 Director and has served on the Board in the past as the Projects Chair. She believes that the NAWJ can have a much larger presence in legal communities in every state through the wonderful projects that help lift the lives of many. She has started several programs in the San Diego community along with many others and was honored by the San Diego County Bar Association in 2020 as the Service Award recipient, by the California Judges Association with the Alba Witkin Humanitarian Award that same year and was honored in 2021 with an award for Commissioner of the Year in California. NAWJ honored Judge McLaughlin with the Norma Wickler award in 2021 for outstanding contributions to the community.

On a personal note, Judge McLaughlin is married to Joseph Keith, and is the parent of a newly married daughter, Siena Sylvester, a recent graduate of Notre Dame Law School, and working at Sheppard Mullin in San Diego. Siena joined the NAWJ while a law student and is an active member. Judge McLaughlin is also the parent of a stepson who graduated from Cal State Monterey and is working in San Diego and a stepdaughter who continues her studies while living and working in San Diego. Cooking and baking make up a large part of her down time, along with trail running with her dogs.