

NEWS RELEASE

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

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SAN FRANCISCO SUPERIOR COURT BENCH ELECTS NEW ASSISTANT PRESIDING JUDGE

Judge Garrett L. Wong Elected to Serve 2-Year Term

SAN FRANCISCO -- The San Francisco Bench has elected Judge Garrett L. Wong to serve as the incoming Assistant Presiding Judge of the San Francisco Superior Court. Judge Wong's 2-year term begins January 1, 2017.

Judge Wong, a member of the San Francisco Bench since 2005, presides over the Asbestos Management Court, and CEQA, land use and related environmental law cases.

"I am inspired by my colleagues' talent, energy and work in supporting our Court with their wisdom and leadership," Judge Wong said. "It is an honor to have their support as we continue to prioritize access to justice for all San Franciscans amid state budget reductions that escalate each year under the judicial branch's funding formula. I look forward to working with incoming Presiding Judge Teri L. Jackson and our entire bench to sustain our operations, programs and services while remaining at the forefront of innovation and new ideas in the pursuit of justice."

San Francisco's incoming diverse judicial leadership team – the first female African American Presiding Judge in San Francisco and an Asian American jurist serving as Assistant Presiding Judge – reflect the diversity of San Francisco and its residents.

"Judge Jackson and I, with the help of our colleagues, are committed to assure that every San Franciscan has equal access to justice and is treated fairly in our courts," Judge Wong said. "Diversity is one of our City's core strengths, and we are proud that our bench reflects these differences."

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An expert in the area of mental health law, Judge Wong has served in numerous leadership positions within the Court and statewide.

Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye recently appointed Judge Wong to serve on the Probate and Mental Health Law Advisory Committee. He previously served for three years on the Mental Health Issues Implementation Task Force, which prepared recommendations to the Judicial Council relating to the improvement of courts' handling on cases involving offenders with mental illness.

Between 2010 and 2014, he presided over the Domestic Violence Court, Behavioral Health Court and Mental Health Court. During this time, he also managed the panel of forensic experts assigned to prepare reports and testify in Competency, Sanity/Insanity and various Civil Commitment or extension proceedings that required the regular review of written opinions and psychological assessments, and oversight and approval of expert compensation drawn from the City's General Fund.

"These courts required creative problem-solving, knowledge of the applicable law, use of evidence-based practices, interpersonal skills and an ability to connect with the mentally ill, and a willingness to collaborate with numerous agencies to advance the placement, treatment and care of defendants with mental health issues," Judge Wong said. "In turn, improvements in the interaction between the criminal justice and mental health systems resulted in more efficient case processing and better outcomes for individuals with mental illness in our criminal courts."

In 2014, the Chief Justice appointed Judge Wong to serve on the Judicial Council's Workload Assessment Advisory Committee. This year, he was reappointed to the committee for a 3-year term to review and advise the Judicial Council on performance measures and implementation plans to improve court administration.

"My participation in this committee has provided me with insight into how the trial court budget process has changed since the advent of state funding and how statewide uniformity and efficiency are related to decisions by our Court regarding increasingly scarce resources," he said.

Judge Wong's court management and administration experience includes his service on the Executive Committee and he was chair of the 2007 Trial Court Five-Year Strategic Planning Committee. He was also a member of the following committees: Human Resources & Personnel; Probation Oversight; ITG/Court Technology; Grand Jury; Court Security; Bail Review; and Education. He also has served as a member and Presiding Judge of the Court's Appellate Panel, which decides appeals from Misdemeanor, Traffic and Limited Civil Jurisdiction cases.

Throughout his judicial career, Judge Wong has served in almost every Criminal department at the Hall of Justice. In 2014, he was assigned to Civil Trials, and then in January 2015, he moved into his current assignment in Department 503. Judge Wong also volunteers in the Truancy Action Partnership, a collaboration among the Court, the San Francisco Unified School

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District, SF Health Network and other community-based organizations to help parents of truant elementary school students overcome obstacles that prevent regular school attendance. Since 2010, he has conducted several trainings of forensic psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health professionals on expert testimony in conjunction with the University of California Langley Porter Institute for Law and Psychiatry and the Forensic Mental Health Association of California.

Prior to his September 2005 judicial appointment by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Judge Wong was a senior counsel for SBC Communications, Inc. (now AT&T) where he worked on corporate, regulatory and operations matters. Previously, he was in private practice for 14 years where he specialized in complex criminal and business litigation. He also was a Deputy Public Defender in San Francisco from 1984 to 1987, and a Georgetown University Law Center E. Barrett Prettyman Fellow in Trial Advocacy where he was Supervising Attorney of its Juvenile Justice Clinic.

He is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley (B.A.), the University of Pennsylvania Law School (J.D.) and Georgetown University Law Center (LL.M). He is a past President of the University of San Francisco Inn of Courts. As a lawyer, he was a member of the Bar Association of San Francisco Board of Directors and chair of its Litigation Section as well as a former board member of the Asian-American Bar Association for the Greater Bay Area.

The San Francisco Superior Court Bench is comprised of 52 Judges and two Commissioners.

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