

NEWS RELEASE

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JUDGE DONALD J. SULLIVAN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

SAN FRANCISCO -- Judge Donald J. Sullivan, a member of the San Francisco bench for more than 13 years, is announcing his retirement, effective today.

"As I reflect on my tenure on the bench, I am extremely proud of my judicial colleagues and all that they have accomplished," Judge Sullivan said. "I will dearly miss them and the many talented and hardworking members of the San Francisco Court staff."

Appointed by Governor Gray Davis to the bench on October 2, 2003, Judge Sullivan spent his first 15 months at the Hall of Justice handling Misdemeanor matters and trials. In late 2004, former Judge Katherine Feinstein, then the Supervising Judge of the Unified Family Court (UFC), encouraged Judge Sullivan to join the UFC, which he did in 2005, serving in both the Family Court and the Juvenile Dependency Court for the next four years.

In Family Court, his cases involved the issues of Custody, Visitation, Spousal Support, Child Support, Division of Property and Domestic Violence. In Juvenile Dependency matters, he was called upon to make challenging decisions about what to do with abused and

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SFSC/JUDGE SULLIVAN
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neglected children. Judge Sullivan enjoyed his work with the UFC and believes that one of the most important assignments a Judge can have is serving families.

In 2009, at the request of then-Presiding Judge James J. McBride, Judge Sullivan served for three years in the Civil Division, doing jury trials. This assignment was like a home-coming for Judge Sullivan, who spent his entire pre-bench career of 32 years trying a wide variety of Civil cases throughout California. He had the pleasure of trying cases before juries in 17 counties. As a Civil trial judge, he presided over trials involving products liability, e.g., asbestos-induced injuries (principally mesothelioma), mortgage fraud, wrongful termination, unlawful detainer, real estate disputes, environmental matters, dangerous condition of public property cases, construction site injuries, and accident cases of all types involving pedestrians, automobiles, bicycles, motorcycles, buses and trucks.

In 2012, then-Presiding Judge Katherine Feinstein assigned Judge Sullivan to a Civil department that handled many different types of hearings, including Civil Harassment Restraining Orders, Elder Abuse, minor's compromises, prove-up hearings and post-judgment relief.

In 2014, at the request of then-Presiding Judge Cynthia Ming-mei Lee, Judge Sullivan returned to the Hall of Justice to try Criminal cases and handle other Criminal hearings. He had a steady diet of Homicide, Rape, Domestic Violence, Robbery, Burglary, Attempted Murder, Aggravated Assault and DUI trials. He also conducted Preliminary Hearings and ran a Motion to Revoke Probation calendar. Judge Sullivan immensely enjoyed this work. As with all his other assignments, he tried his best to be calm, patient and respectful and make his courtroom a welcoming place for the litigants and their attorneys. He had a good working relationship with the attorneys from the District Attorney's Office and the Public Defenders'

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SFSC/JUDGE SULLIVAN
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Office and holds both offices in very high esteem.

Judge Harry Dorfman, a good friend and colleague of Judge Sullivan, said of his Hall of Justice colleague, “Don Sullivan preceded me to the bench by about 10 years. Yet, from the start, he greeted me warmly, treated me as his equal, and gave me excellent advice before I took over Dept. 514’s Civil Harassment and Default Judgment responsibilities. The wall of books – fiction and non-fiction – in his chambers was very impressive! I will miss my friend’s constant support, thoughtful words, and mischievous sense of humor (especially when he said it in French!). Au revoir, mon ami!”

Judge Samuel K. Feng, another friend and colleague from the HOJ, said, “Don Sullivan is the consummate jurist. He is patient, compassionate, even-tempered and is always there to help his colleagues. Judge Sullivan is always respectful to everyone who appears before him. Our court will miss his smile and I will miss his collegial spirit.”

From 2014 to 2016, Judge Sullivan also served on the Court’s Appellate Panel. In 2013, he received the Judge of the Year Award from the San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association.

Judge Sullivan graduated in 1968 from Santa Clara University with a bachelor’s in Electrical Engineering. Thereafter, he was the recipient of a James B. Emery Scholarship to Santa Clara’s law school and received his J.D. in 1971. He graduated in the top ten of his class.

After law school, he took a job with the San Francisco regional office of the Department of Transportation, State of California. This office represented Caltrans in about 30 counties in California. From 1972 through 1987, he tried a number of dangerous

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SFSC/JUDGE SULLIVAN

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condition of public property, eminent domain, inverse condemnation, injury to real property and breach of contract cases throughout California. Many trials lasted between four and 10 weeks. To this day, Judge Sullivan feels very fortunate to have worked with so many gifted trial lawyers in state service.

In 1987, Judge Sullivan entered private practice and accepted a job with the well-known plaintiff's side tort and employment firm of Herron & Herron located in the Transamerica Pyramid. He remembers that their offices comprised the entire north side of the 33rd floor and the "bridge to bridge" views were both breathtaking and distracting. It was always a joy going to work! Sullivan's practice centered on toxic torts, defective products (including vehicles, machines and pharmaceuticals), construction site accidents, wrongful termination, medical malpractice and accident cases of all types. Judge Sullivan remains grateful to all those at the Herron firm who made his introduction into the private practice of law such a welcoming and satisfying experience.

In the early 1990s, he became board certified by the National Board of Trial Advocates and the American Board of Professional Liability Attorneys. He also was elected by his peers into the American Board of Trial Advocates in 1992.

In 1998, Judge Sullivan joined the highly regarded and well-respected Law Offices of Thomas J. Brandi in San Francisco. Judge Sullivan and Mr. Brandi had worked previously together in the 1970s as attorneys for the State Department of Transportation. Until his appointment to the bench six years later, Judge Sullivan worked side by side, with many talented professionals at the Brandi law firm, on catastrophic injury and death cases of all types, helping deserving individuals and families receive just compensation for their losses. Judge Sullivan has many happy and poignant memories of his time at the Brandi firm.

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