

NEWS RELEASE

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

400 McAllister Street, Room 205
San Francisco, CA 94102-4512
Phone: 415-551-5737
FAX: 415-551-5701



T. MICHAEL YUEN
COURT EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Contact:

Megan Filly
(415) 551-5743
mfilly@sftc.org

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HALL OF JUSTICE VETERAN TO RETIRE AFTER SERVING 31 YEARS ON SAN FRANCISCO BENCH

SAN FRANCISCO -- After serving nearly four decades in the City & County of San Francisco as a Judge, Commissioner, and deputy public defender, Judge Carol Yaggy has retired from the San Francisco bench, Presiding Judge Garrett L. Wong announced today.

"Judge Yaggy's retirement is a profound loss to our Court, our justice partners, and our community," Presiding Judge Wong said. "She will be remembered as a legend on the San Francisco trial bench. In her daily life and in work, she exemplified what we all strive to achieve as judges – fidelity to the law, honor and integrity. Judge Yaggy was a devoted and phenomenal jurist and I wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement."

Judge Yaggy's judicial career began in 1987 when she was appointed as a Superior Court Commissioner. During her 11-year tenure as a Commissioner, she handled Juvenile Delinquency cases at the Youth Guidance Center, known presently as the Juvenile Justice Center, and at various civil courthouses, where she presided over Civil Discovery, Probate, Mental Health, Civil Harassment, and Small Claims Appeals cases. Elected as a Superior Court judge in 1998 to an open seat, Judge Yaggy launched her 20-year judicial career at the Hall of Justice (HOJ). At HOJ, Judge Yaggy has deftly served as an expert on criminal matters and graciously mentored new Judges. During her two decades as a criminal judge and expert on trying felony cases, she

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presided over 26 homicide trials, including the Lee Bell case and the Binh Thai Luc case, both in 2017.

Judge Yaggy is well-known in the criminal justice community for her genuine compassion, and exemplary legal and procedural knowledge. Her quick wit from the bench helped to make attorneys and defendants less nervous – even in the most serious of circumstances. Prosecutors and defense attorneys who appeared before Judge Yaggy noted their deep respect for her courtroom demeanor -- even if they did not achieve their desired outcome.

“An incredibly nurturing person, Judge Yaggy was the heart and soul of the Court during her tenure,” said former Presiding Judge Cynthia Ming-mei Lee, a cherished friend and colleague who spent many years serving alongside Judge Yaggy at HOJ. “I personally am grateful for her commitment in helping to shape the San Francisco bench. Judge Yaggy earned the reputation among the San Francisco bench of being the ‘go-to judge for all things criminal.’ She is irreplaceable and will be missed by all — Judges and staff.”

Judge Yaggy’s passion and legal prowess is echoed in the sentiments of lawyers who practiced before her. “Over the past two decades, Judge Yaggy established herself as a trusted and respected Judge because of her dedication, compassion, integrity and fairness. She excels in every role, from running a court calendar to presiding over complex trials,” said Assistant District Attorney Marshall Khine. “She makes everyone feel welcome and valued in the courtroom. Her contributions to San Francisco and her positive influence on attorneys and Judges will be an enduring legacy. We will greatly miss Judge Yaggy’s daily presence at the Hall of Justice.”

Deputy Public Defender Mark Jacobs added, “I appreciated appearing in front of Carol Yaggy because she was always well prepared, and she had a great temperament on the bench. She was always respectful to my clients. She had a great sense of humor and made everyone feel welcome in her court.”

During her time at the Court, Judge Yaggy served on various local and statewide committees, including a 7-year term on the Court’s Executive Committee from 2011-2017.

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In 2002, she was appointed to a 3-year term on the Court's Appellate Panel. From 2005-2009, Judge Yaggy served as the Chair of the Judicial Planning Committee for the California Judges Benchguides 2005-2009. As chair of this statewide committee, Judge Yaggy's work helped to improve the quality of education and training for judicial officers. Under her direction, the committee developed bench guides for judicial officers across the state on various legal topics. During her tenure, the committee directed the launch of the first online courses for Judges, using technology to improve ease and access to judicial training. A significant endeavor outside of work, Judge Yaggy served from 1999-2009 on the Board of Directors for the Progress Foundation, a non-profit that provides community-based treatment and supportive housing for individuals who are disabled from mental illness.

From 1980-1987, Judge Yaggy served as a deputy public defender and senior trial attorney for the San Francisco Public Defender's Office. Prior to her career in the law, she was a Project Director for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington D.C.

Judge Yaggy earned a Juris Doctorate degree from the Golden Gate University School of Law and a Bachelor's degree in political science and international affairs from Tufts University.

Judge Yaggy's retirement leaves one vacancy on the 52-member San Francisco Superior Court bench.

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