



NEWS RELEASE

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Superior Court Judge Laura P. Hammes Retires

Superior Court Judge Laura P. Hammes will retire on June 11, 2006 after serving more than twenty years on the San Diego bench. A former San Diego County Deputy District Attorney, Judge Hammes was appointed in 1984 by Governor George Deukmejian.

Judge Laura Hammes' expertise has been in the field of criminal law where she has spent the past 21 of her 22 years on the bench. Judge Hammes has handled numerous high profiles cases, including the 1989 death penalty trial of serial killer David Allen Lucas. Judge Hammes was also the first jurist in San Diego to order a life sentence under *Three Strikes* in the early 1990s. She gained notoriety more recently when she released three juveniles originally charged in the Stephanie Crowe murder case. That case was subsequently dismissed after discovery of DNA evidence implicating another suspect.

"Judge Hammes is a respected colleague who is dedicated to our judicial system. She has devoted her judicial career to criminal law and has been a role model for all judges. We will miss her says, Presiding Judge Janis Sammartino

"I will miss my colleagues and the human drama involved in trials," says Judge Hammes, "I support the judicial system wholeheartedly. The difference between a free, democratic country and a totalitarian country is in the process by which an ordinary citizen stands to lose freedom or privacy at the hands of the government. We must make sure the process protects both the individual citizen and the People.

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Throughout her career, Judge Hammes has worked to improve the judicial system. She was a member of Governor George Deukmejian's Judicial Selection Advisory Board. In 1992 she started *The Criminal Justice Forum*, a professional roundtable whose members include experienced criminal law experts from the judiciary, defense, and prosecution. Founding members included Hammes, Judge Perry Langford, well-known defense attorney Peter Hughes, and then prosecutor, now Judge George Clarke. The *Forum* has weighed in on issues such as placement of the San Diego County Jail downtown, Rules of Court, and the new California Criminal Jury Instructions.

Judge Hammes was a member of the Superior Court Executive Committee and chaired San Diego County's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Task Force where she co-wrote and helped pass legislation to share information between Juvenile Courts and public schools. Other changes she spearheaded through her many committee chairmanships include: establishment of the "First Tuesday Brown Bag" educational programs for judges county-wide, revised county felony plea forms, a permanent judicial photo display in the civil court downtown, and a revised procedure for handling citizen complaints against subordinate judicial officers.

A native San Diegan, Judge Hammes graduated from the Stanford Law School and served with the District Attorney's Office from 1972 to 1984 where she specialized in child abuse and molestation cases. Married with two adult children, Judge Hammes plans to take some time off before deciding her retirement plans.

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