



NEWS RELEASE

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San Diego Superior Court's New Leadership Committed to Fair and Equal Access to the Courts

San Diego County Superior Court Judges have elected Assistant Presiding Judge Janis Sammartino to the position of Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, the second woman to ever attain that position. Judges also elected Superior Court Judge Kenneth So to fill the Assistant Presiding Judge position to be vacated by Sammartino at the end of 2005.

Starting January 1, 2006, both Judges Sammartino and So will serve two year terms during which they will supervise and manage the San Diego Superior Court, the second largest trial court in the state. The judicial leaders will oversee a Court budget of more than 200 million dollars, 154 judicial officers and support staff of more than 1600 employees. An Executive Committee of Superior Court Judges from around the county and administrative staff will assist Judges Sammartino and So in leading the Court.

"It is an honor to guide the San Diego Superior Court and the men and women who make this Court one of the best in the country. We are committed to our mission of providing fair and timely justice to all and ensuring equal access to the Court. During the next two years, it's my goal to bring that message to the community," says Judge Sammartino.

Judge Sammartino has served as Assistant Presiding Judge since January 2004 and is the second woman elected by the Judges of the Superior Court to the position of Presiding Judge. Former Superior Court Judge Judith McConnell became the first female Presiding Superior Court Judge in San Diego in 1990. Judge Sammartino's prior judicial assignments have included Family and Civil Court.

Judge Sammartino was appointed to the bench in 1994 by Governor Pete Wilson. Before becoming a judge, she worked as a Deputy City Attorney for the City of San Diego (1976-1994) leaving that employment as a Senior Chief Deputy City Attorney. Judge Sammartino received her law degree from Notre Dame University after graduating from Occidental College in Los Angeles.

Judge So is currently assigned to the Downtown Criminal Court and was appointed to the bench by Governor Pete Wilson in 1994. Judge So's prior employment includes work with the San Diego City Attorney's Office (1980-1994) and work as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Michigan (1979). Judge So received his J.D from Hastings College of Law in San Francisco after completing his undergraduate studies at Harvard University.

"I look forward to participating in the management of this Court over the next two years and to continuing our efforts in maintaining a leadership role in the State Judiciary," says Judge So.

Beginning January 1st, Judge Sammartino will replace Presiding Judge John S. Einhorn, who has overseen the San Diego Court system for two years and will be returning to his Superior Court Judge position at the end of his term.

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