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SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA • COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Diego Superior Court Judge Margie Gunthardt Woods Retires

June 7, 2021 – Judge Margie Gunthardt Woods will officially retire from the San Diego Superior Court today after serving more than 30 years as a judicial officer in various capacities. She began her judicial career as a Superior Court Juvenile Court Referee at just 33 years of age, presiding over juvenile dependency and delinquency cases from 1987-1990. Judge Woods returned to the bench in 1993 when she was selected to serve as a Municipal Court Commissioner. Upon the unification of the Municipal Court and the Superior Court in 1998, Judge Woods continued to serve as a Superior Court Commissioner until her gubernatorial appointment to become a judge on June 5, 2001.

While serving on the San Diego Superior Court bench, she has presided over juvenile matters, criminal trials, mental health cases including Behavioral Health Court, and almost all other areas of California law and case types, except probate and long cause civil jury matters.

“Over the last four decades of my legal career, I hope that I have succeeded in reaching my goal to help others,” said Judge Woods. “To give a person a fair break, to fairly resolve disputes with an open mind; to give those who need the law for protection, resolution, or fair consequences for a wrong committed some satisfaction that the justice system is good and that it can work well for all of us.”

Judge Woods has been active in the legal community in San Diego and across California throughout her career. Locally, she has lectured on vast legal subjects including family law, juvenile law, ethnicity and cultural difference as well as gender and racial bias issues. Judge Woods has served as a seminar leader and faculty member with the California Judicial Education and Research New Judicial Officer Orientation Programs and Judicial College for judges across the state. On the national front, she served as planning committee Co-Chair for the National Association of Women Judges 36th Annual Conference in 2014. The many participants and speakers included state and federal judges from across the United States as well as international judges spanning the globe.

Judge Woods has regularly interacted with students of all ages in legal career and court education programs such as mock trials. With younger students, she has participated in reading programs with the Lawyers Club and La Raza Lawyers organizations. During the last year with remote learning, Judge Wood has participated in the Judges in the Classroom remote learning initiative program providing instruction for kindergarten through 12th grade students regarding the constitution and the three branches of government.

“Judge Woods is a true team player who was willing to serve across all branches of our court, from juvenile to family to criminal cases and more,” said San Diego Superior Court Presiding Judge Lorna Alksne. “She is a remarkable leader who found happiness in mentoring others and elevating women across our profession. Her excellent demeanor will be missed, especially by her judicial colleagues as well as the lawyers who loved appearing in her courtroom.”

Judge Woods is a strong believer in helping others outside the legal community as well. She has been a dedicated volunteer with Meals on Wheels (MOW) San Diego County for over 30 years. She has served on the MOW Board of Trustees for more than 20 years and served as board president in 1998. Judge Woods continues to regularly deliver healthy meals to homebound seniors and elders during the weekends on a monthly basis.

Judge Woods was honored with the 2021 Presidents’ Award from the Pan Asian and Filipino American Lawyers of San Diego Associations in recognition of service and dedication to the law and the San Diego community. She was the recipient of the 2018 Alba Witkin Humanitarian Award from the California Judges Association and California Judges Foundation. Other accolades include the Judicial Trailblazer from the Women of Color in the Law Group and Phenomenal Woman from the Minority Bar Associations in San Diego County.

Born in Jakarta, Indonesia, Judge Woods immigrated with her parents to the Netherlands as an infant and her family later immigrated to the United States in 1960, settling in Denver, Colorado. Judge Woods received her undergraduate degree at the University of Northern Colorado in 1976. She earned her Juris Doctor at the University of San Diego School of Law in 1980.

“We should each be mindful to treasure today. There are no guarantees of what will happen next as we continue forward in life,” said Judge Woods. “I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the public and to work with wise, knowing and dedicated judges and commissioners. I am grateful for the commitment to the rule of law by my colleagues, attorneys, clerks, sheriff deputies, interpreters and all support members of the court. I hold dear the memories of the daily work, chins up and smiles through the years. I remain inspired by those of us who are dedicated to the principles of respect and compassion for others of all walks of life, backgrounds, race and ethnicity.”

In retirement, Judge Woods plans to explore the history of people of her ancestry. She is Indo-European and was born after 1949 when Indonesia gained its independence from 300 years of colonial rule by the Netherlands. There are many stories of culture and folklore from the old country that Judge Woods has heard from her mother and other elders over the years. She hopes to put these stories into writing for prosperity and for others who have come after to enjoy and treasure. San Diego will remain her home base. She plans to continue to travel throughout Asia and Europe when she is not mentoring others, volunteering with Meals on Wheels San Diego County, or preparing to summit Mount Whitney for the fourth time. She also plans to spend more time enjoying the great outdoors with her husband and their doodle dogs plus regularly visit their son and daughter-in-law who live in New York.