



Superior Court of California County of Orange ***News Release***

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Judges Unanimously Elect Hon. Erick L. Larsh as Presiding Judge and Hon. Maria D. Hernandez as Assistant Presiding Judge in Uncontested Election

Santa Ana, Calif. – Hon. Erick L. Larsh was elected Presiding Judge, and Hon. Maria D. Hernandez Assistant Presiding Judge in an uncontested election for the two top posts of the Superior Court of California, County of Orange. Both Judge Larsh and Judge Hernandez will begin their two-year terms on January 1, 2021.

Judge Larsh is the current Assistant Presiding Judge. He was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to the Orange County Superior Court bench in 2005. He has served as Supervising Judge at the Central Justice Center in Santa Ana, as well as at the West Justice Center in Westminster, and as Supervising Judge for the Domestic Violence Courts. He also served as the Chair of the Family Violence Coordination Committee and Chair of the Collaborative Courts Education Committee, Center for Judicial Education and Research. Before his appointment to the bench, he served as an Orange County Superior Court Commissioner from 1997 to 2005. Judge Larsh has also taught in several colleges over the years, among them Biola University, California State University, and Witkin Judicial College.

He graduated from Western State University College of Law with a Juris Doctor degree in 1986 and from the California State University, Fullerton, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology in 1983. He received the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, Southern California Section Judge of the Year Award (2016); the Orange County Bar Association honored him with the Family Law Section J.E.T. Rutter Award for Outstanding Judicial Contribution to Family Law (2017); and the Association of Certified Family Law Specialists presented him with the Judicial Officer of the Year (2018) County Chapter award.

Judge Hernandez was appointed to the Orange County Superior Court bench by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2009, getting her start in Juvenile Court, where she developed the GRACE (Generating Resources to Abolish Child Exploitation) calendar, a program focused on separating teens from a life of forced prostitution. Judge Hernandez served as the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court (2014-2018) before returning to Court's Felony

Trial Panel handling felony criminal trials. She also recently created and launched the Young Adult Court (YAC).

She graduated from Western State University College of Law in 1991 and from UC Irvine with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1986. She began her legal career at the Law Offices of Patrick D. McNeal, Santa Ana, (1992-94), and then joined the Public Defender's office (1994-2006), before Orange County judges elected her Commissioner in 2006. Judge Hernandez received the Distinguished Service Award (2016), the highest award presented by the Judicial Council of California. In 2016, she was named Judge of the Year by the O.C. Women Lawyers Association and that same year she was inducted into the Western State College of Law Hall of Fame. In 2019, the State of California Women Lawyers Association presented Judge Hernandez with the Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award.

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