



March 2025
Report from District 14
Honorable Victoria Kolakowski and Honorable Renee Stackhouse

California and Nevada

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Our Mission

NAWJ's mission is to promote the judicial role of protecting the rights of individuals under the rule of law through strong, committed, diverse judicial leadership; fairness and equality in the courts; and equal access to justice.

Welcome!

Welcome to new members:

Judge Meghan Heesch (San Diego)

Attorney Uche Enenwali (Los Angeles)

Executive Director Nicole Virga Bautista, California Judges Association (Sacramento)

Whether you are a new, or returning, member, we (Co-District 14 Directors Hon. Victoria Kolakowski, Alameda and Hon. Renee Stackhouse, San Diego) are thrilled to be able to represent you this year. Please do not hesitate to reach out with suggestions or questions.

Worried your membership has lapsed? [Email us](#) to find out!

Get Involved

- State Chair

District 14 is looking for two State Chairs (one each for CA & NV). These individuals would assist the District Co-Directors in gathering information about members to publish in the NAWJ Monthly Update and may provide a pathway to becoming a District Director. If you are interested in getting more involved with NAWJ in this role, please let us know by clicking [here](#).

- Create programs in your area!

Do you want to get more involved in NAWJ but don't have an active group...yet? We can work with you to give you the help you need to start one of these programs in your area. Just reach out!

Upcoming Events

- NAWJ Midyear Meeting. Registration is still open! Registration is open and available [here](#). The NAWJ 2025 Midyear Meeting will take place March 20-22, 2025, at the Lawyers Club at the University of Michigan School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan and accommodations will be available at the Graduate Hotel a few blocks away.

Sessions and speakers include:

- The Invisible Cost of Administering Justice: How Judges Can Prioritize Their Own Healing To Better Serve Themselves and Others featuring Rick Barinbaum, Professor Bridgette Carr, and Professor Vivek Sankaran.
 - Bridging the Gap: State Court Leadership in Increasing Access to Justice featuring Chief Justice Elizabeth Clement
 - How Can Specialty Court Increase Access to Justice? Featuring Hon. Mariam Bazzi, Hon. Megan Cavanagh, Hon. Shauna Dunning, Hon. Allie Maldonado, and Jayesh Patel.
 - Justice in the AI Age: Supporting Self-Represented Litigants featuring Dennis Kennedy
 - Making the Move: Best Practices, Ethics & Tips to Transition to ADR featuring Maryan Hatcher, Esq., Joan Kessler, Esq., PhD., Hon. Denise Langford Morris (Ret.) and Hon. Heather A. Welch (Ret.)
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- San Diego's [Success Inside & Out](#) program has been set for November 7, 2025. If you would like to join our meetings to see how we prepare, or help us brainstorm and prepare, we'd love to have you join! Please [reach out to us](#)!

Past Events

On February 27, 2025, the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara proudly hosted its annual ***Color of Justice*** event, a program designed to inspire and empower youth from all backgrounds to explore careers within the justice system. This year's event saw overwhelming interest, with 79 students in attendance and a waitlist of eager participants, underscoring the critical need for initiatives that foster diversity and representation in the legal field.

The event began with welcoming remarks from Hon. Julie Emede, Presiding Judge, and Hon. Julia Alloggiamento, Chair of the Court Community Outreach Committee and Vice Chair of California's Power of Democracy Steering Committee. The morning's address, delivered by Hon. Micaél P. Estremera, set the tone by emphasizing the importance of early exposure to the legal system and the essential role of diversity in ensuring a more equitable judiciary.

"We are the color of justice—transcending race to embrace gender, heritage, native language, and every aspect of identity that shapes who you are," said Hon. Estremera. "Some of you may feel that your identity is a barrier to becoming a lawyer, probation officer, judge, or police officer. But your identity is not a limitation—it is your strength. You are the future leaders of our legal community."

A compelling panel discussion featuring Byron Suarez, Deputy District Attorney, and Miguel Rodriguez, Deputy Public Defender, provided students with real-life perspectives on overcoming obstacles and pursuing careers in law. These powerful narratives were followed by interactive table discussions, where students engaged directly with mentors from diverse backgrounds, including attorneys, judges, probation officers, and law enforcement professionals.

The program's distinguished keynote speaker, Justice Charles E. Wilson of the Sixth District Court of Appeal, delivered an inspiring address highlighting the significance of inclusion and representation in the legal system. His remarks reinforced the message that diverse voices and perspectives strengthen the judicial process and build greater trust within the community.

"The students attending this event are essential to solving society's most pressing challenges. Whether it's criminal justice reform, immigration rights, or privacy in the digital age—the future solutions are in this room," said Justice Wilson.

Through personal stories and candid discussions, table mentors helped students recognize that pathways into the legal field are accessible to individuals from all walks of life. These conversations aimed to dismantle barriers and encourage young people to consider careers in the justice system—careers they may not have previously envisioned for themselves.

"Every single one of us should remember where we came from, despite the education and career paths we choose. You can be successful in life with anything you do as long as you are

passionate. Despite adversities and challenges we may face, just go for it and don't let anything hold you back," said a student from Gilroy Early College Academy.

The *Color of Justice* event would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of our partners, whose dedication to recruitment and outreach ensured that a diverse group of students could take part. The Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara extends its deepest gratitude to all who contributed to the success of this event. The Court's Community Outreach Committee acknowledges the generous funding from the California Judges Foundation, whose commitment to enhancing communities across California has been instrumental in making this program possible.



Mentors for the event standing as a testament to how far they have come versus where they started.

**Taken from Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara's March 3, 2025 press release.

Los Angeles Court Rises to the Occasion

D14 recognizes Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles' hard work and efforts in the aftermath of the fires.

Since Jan. 14, staff from the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's self-help centers have assisted residents on site at local [disaster recovery centers](#) at UCLA Research Park West and Altadena. The centers are supported by FEMA and mark a collaboration between various local and state agencies and federal partners, including the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Los Angeles County, and the City of Los Angeles. There are currently about 65 agencies represented at the sites.

As of Feb. 19, the court had helped 258 court users at the UCLA Research Park West location and 312 court users at the Altadena location.

You can read more [here](#) about their efforts.

Recognitions & Congratulations



Judge Nadia J. Keilani (San Diego, CA)

Judge Keilani is receiving the Iranian American Bar Association's San Diego Public Service Award on March 15, 2025, at the IABA Annual Norouz Gala. The IABA San Diego Public Service Award is awarded to celebrate individuals and organizations that exemplify the values of altruism, civic responsibility, and community engagement, thereby inspiring others to follow in their footsteps and contribute to the common good.



Judge Chandra Reid (San Diego, CA)

Judge Reid, who served as a San Diego Superior Court Commissioner since 2021, has been elevated to Superior Court Judge by Governor Newsom on February 14, 2025. She Co-Chairs NAWJ's San Diego Success Inside & Out program.



Judge (and former NAWJ President) Tamila Ipema (Ret.) and Judge Marion Gaston (San Diego, CA)

Both Judge Ipema (Ret.) and Judge Gaston participated in the Vatican's two-day academy speaking on Artificial Intelligence, Justice, and Democracy. The event was hosted by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in collaboration with the Argentina-based [Pan-American Committee of Judges for Social Rights and Franciscan Doctrine \(COPAJU\)](#) and its academic

branch, the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Institute for Legal Research (IFBC).

