



SUMMER 2011

Message from the Chair

Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye recently appointed Justice Richard D. Huffman, Associate Justice of the Fourth District Court of Appeals in San Diego to replace retired California Supreme Court Associate Justice Carlos R. Moreno as chair of the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. Justice Huffman has been a member of the commission since its inception in 2006.



It is my great pleasure to launch this Summer 2011 issue of the *Foster Care Reform Update*. I am sure that all of you join me in wishing our former chair of the commission, Justice Moreno, all of the best in his new position with Irell & Manella in Los Angeles. His new law firm offers him a variety of interesting and challenging opportunities, not the least of which is the opportunity to mentor and recruit young attorneys and law students. After twelve years of commuting weekly from Los Angeles to San Francisco, he is very happy to be settling back into the community that he loves so much.

Justice Moreno leaves big shoes to fill. His work on behalf of children and families in the child welfare system has been significant. Just last month California Assemblymember Jim Beall, Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care, presented a resolution to Justice Moreno to honor his work on the bench and his work on behalf of children in foster care. Congratulations, Justice Moreno!

I have been a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission since it began in 2006, and I am deeply gratified to see all of your efforts at the county and state levels bring life to our recommendations to improve the foster care system. I have been particularly happy to see the great progress made in the establishment of county-level local foster care commissions. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year on behalf of this state's most vulnerable children and families.

As an appellate judge, I have not wanted to lose touch with 'reality', so have asked the Chief Justice every year to allow me to sit on assignment in the trial courts. About 8 or 9 years ago I sat on a 3-month assignment in juvenile court, and it's the best thing I've ever done. I've asked to sit in juvenile court almost every year since then. In addition to learning that I can make as many mistakes as any trial judge, I saw the crushing caseloads, the effects of limited resources, the tremendous burden carried by social workers, and I experienced firsthand the life and death nature of the work. I believe that those of you who practice in the juvenile and family courts are doing the most important work in our court system.

In closing, I thank you again for the great work that you are doing on behalf of California's children in foster care, youth aging out of foster care, and those children and families in danger of coming into the child welfare system. I believe that your work is already beginning to deliver on our promise of a brighter future for these children and their families.