

## Joint Working Group for California's Language Access Plan: Member Bios

### Cochairs

**Hon. Maria P. Rivera** was appointed as an Associate Justice, First District Court of Appeal, Division Four, in 2002. From 1997 to 2002, she served as a judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Contra Costa, where she was Supervising Judge of the Family Law Division. Justice Rivera is the former Chair and a current member of the Access and Fairness Advisory Committee, which monitors issues related to access to the judicial system and fairness in the state courts and provides the Judicial Council with policy direction in these areas. In 2002, Justice Rivera was named San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association Honoree of the Year. She has served on several advisory boards, including the Latino Leadership Forum, an organization that supports and encourages Latino youth who show leadership potential. For twelve years, she served on the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission as an advisory member. Justice Rivera earned her J.D. from University of San Francisco Law School (magna cum laude) in 1974.

More info: <http://www.courts.ca.gov/7665.htm>

**Hon. Manuel J. Covarrubias** was appointed to the Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, in 2002 to a Family Law assignment and continues to serve in Family Law. Judge Covarrubias also served as a member of the Access and Fairness Advisory Committee and as co-chair to Access and Fairness' Race and Ethnic Subcommittee. In 2011, Judge Covarrubias was appointed to the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel, and is currently an active member. He often volunteers to participate in the Court Interpreters Ethics Workshop, for new interpreters, serving as a panel member, offering new interpreters advice, answering questions and relating his experience working with court interpreters. Prior to being named to the bench, Judge Covarrubias was the Superior Court Commissioner in Ventura County, a position he held from 1993 to 2002. Judge Covarrubias is fluent in Spanish and has served on the boards of a number of Hispanic community and professional organizations. He earned his J.D. from Loyola School of Law in 1977.

### Joint Working Group Members

**Hon. Steven K. Austin** is currently the Chair for the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel and the Assistant Presiding Judge at the Contra Costa Superior Court. He attended Hastings College of The Law where he received his J.D. degree in 1981. Judge has Austin served as a trial judge at the Contra Costa County Superior Court in California since 1998. He has served as a branch court supervising judge, supervising judge of the civil departments and as a member of the court's executive committee. Judge Austin was a member of the California Judicial Council's Access and Fairness Advisory Committee from 1999 to 2011, and served on the executive committee for several of those years. He is also a past Chair of the CJER Fairness Education Committee. He is one of two judicial members of the California Commission on Access to Justice and served as Chair from 2007 to 2010. He frequently serves as faculty for judicial education programs, including a series of satellite broadcasts for court staff.

**Kenneth W. Babcock** is the Executive Director and General Counsel of the Public Law Center. The Public Law Center, Orange County's non-profit pro bono law firm, is committed to providing access to justice for low-income Orange County residents. He has served on the California Commission on Access to Justice (2006-12) (vice-chair 2009-11) (co-chair Funding Committee 2007-12). He has also served on the

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Judicial Council's Civil & Small Claims Advisory Committee (1999-2004), as well as various other state and local groups related to access to justice.

**Jaeis Chon** is a certified Korean court interpreter, and since 1990 has provided both legal and conference interpreting for numerous international conferences, business meetings and network broadcasting shows. He has also interpreted, and continues to interpret for numerous state agencies. Mr. Chon is currently a professor at the Los Angeles Institute of Translation and Interpretation, as well as a professor for the certificate program in Interpretation offered through UCLA Extension. Dr. Chon is an active member of both the American Translators Association and the Korean Professional Interpreters Association. Jaeis also holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration.

**Tracy Clark** is a certified ASL court interpreter who worked for over 25 years as an independent contractor before becoming a staff interpreter in 2006. In 2011, Tracy became the Manager of Interpreting Services for the Superior Court of California, County of Ventura, overseeing interpreting services of all languages. Ms. Clark has an MA in Linguistics from CSUN, where she also taught courses in interpretation and linguistics. She has served on the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel for over six years, chairing the subcommittee that developed the *Recommended Guidelines for Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) for ASL-Interpreted Events*.

**Debra Donson** is currently Region 1 court interpreter member of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel. For the past two years, Debra has participated on the panel as a member of the Professional Standards and Ethics Subcommittee. Debra is a U.S. District Court and California certified court interpreter. Her experience as an interpreter in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, and background in linguistics, TESOL and language acquisition, inform her perspective on maintaining quality language access to the California court system.

**Hon. Dennis W. Hayashi** has devoted his entire life to serving the public and working to preserve individual civil liberties. He currently serves as a judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda, and is a member of the Access and Fairness Advisory Committee. Under President Clinton, Judge Hayashi was the Director of the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As one of the top public officials in the Clinton Administration, Judge Hayashi was responsible for ensuring that civil rights laws were enforced including the Age Discrimination Act, Americans with Disabilities Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Previously, Judge Hayashi served as the Director of the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing. The Department protects the rights of seniors, women, the disabled and minorities who face discrimination on the job, in housing, or public accommodations. Judge Hayashi graduated from Occidental College and obtained his law degree from Hastings Law School.

**Janet Hudec** is currently Region 3 court interpreter member of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel. Since November 2011, she has been employed by the Superior Court of Madera County as a Spanish interpreter. Ms. Hudec is also an educator and taught interpreting at California State University in Fresno where she assisted in the re-design of the current interpreting program, including creating an interactive course that utilized online tools. She also taught Spanish for the Fresno Unified School

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District. She received her interpreter training at the Southern California School of Interpreting. Ms. Hudec holds an M.A. in Commercial Law from the Universidad del Valle de Atejemac, Guadalajara, and a B.A. from California State University, Monterey Bay.

**Oleksandra Johnson** is a research attorney for the U.S. District Court, Southern District of California. She has also worked as an independent court interpreter in San Diego, California, since 2001. She received her J.D., cum laude, from the University of San Diego School of Law in 2009. While in law school, she served as Senior Executive Editor of the San Diego Law Review and published *The Bankruptcy Code as Complete Preemption: The Ultimate Trump?* (81 Am. Bankr. L.J. 31, 2007). Ms. Johnson is a certified Russian and a registered Ukrainian interpreter with the Judicial Council of California, and a certified English-Russian translator with the American Translators Association. She is a native of Ukraine, where she received her M.A., graduating with honors from Kiev Shevchenko University.

**Kristine S. Kussman** was appointed as Court Executive Officer for the Superior Court of California, County of Imperial, in January 2010, and has 26 years of experience with the trial court. Ms. Kussman is a native of Imperial Valley and received her BS in Business Administration and Finance in 1981 from California State University, Dominguez Hills in Carson, California. After six years in the private sector, she began her court career in Imperial County in 1987 as an Accounting Clerk, later became Accounting Supervisor, Automation Coordinator, and Deputy Municipal Court Administrator. Upon the Court's unification in 1998, she was appointed as Assistant CEO. In October 2009, she was appointed as Interim CEO until her permanent appointment to the position.

**Ginger Lamar** is the Unit Manager for Court Reporter and Interpreter Services, at the Superior Court of Orange County. Ms. Lamar brings more than 33 years of service to the Superior Court of Orange County. She joined the court in August 1980 and began her current role as unit manager in 2006. Over the course of her career she has worked with judicial officers, court interpreters, unions, and the public. She serves as a member of the advisory board for California State University at Fullerton's certificate program in legal interpretation. Ms. Lamar was appointed to the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel in November 2011 as an advisor, due to her subject matter expertise in court interpreter operations and management.

**Bao Luu** is a translator and certified court interpreter in the Vietnamese language for the Superior Court of California, County of Orange. He migrated to Southern California in 1979 after the fall of Saigon and acquired a B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering. After holding various jobs from warehouseman to manager to business owner in the private sector, one day he unexpectedly experienced a calling to enter the interpreting profession. When not working, he enjoys reading among other interests.

**Hon. Miguel Márquez** was appointed to the California Court of Appeal by Governor Edmund G. Brown on May 18, 2012, and was confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments on June 28, 2012. Prior to assuming judicial office, Justice Márquez served as the County Counsel for the County of Santa Clara. Born in California, Justice Márquez's commitment to public service, in part, grows out of his early public school experiences. His parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico with a limited amount of formal education. Spanish is his first language, so Head Start programs were critical to his

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early education. These formative experiences gave impetus to his early career as an attorney and inspired his commitment to public service. Justice Márquez received his law degree from the Boalt Hall School of Law, University of California, Berkeley, in 1996.

More info: <http://www.courts.ca.gov/18545.htm>

**Lisa McNaughton** brings years of teaching and interpreting experience to the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel. With a B.A. and M.A. from Stanford University in Spanish and Latin American Language and Literature, with a concentration in Latin American Studies, and a Master’s in Educational Leadership from the University of Alabama, Lisa was a teacher and school administrator for 13 years in El Salvador, and eight years in California. She became a certified interpreter in 2002 and has been employed by the Superior Court of California, County of Sonoma, since that time.

**Thuy Thi Nguyen** has served since 2003 as General Counsel for the Peralta Community College District. She is a refugee from Vietnam. The Mayor of Oakland named June 23, 1993, “Thuy Thi Nguyen Day” for her community service. Thuy was named “Best Lawyers Under 40” in the country by NAPABA in 2007; and received the Trailblazer Award from VABANC in 2011. Her publication, “25 Vietnamese Americans in 25 Years,” is archived in the Library of Congress. Thuy graduated from Yale and UCLA School of Law.

**Ivette Peña** has served as court counsel for the Los Angeles Superior Court since 2000. In that capacity, she advises the Presiding Judge and the Court Executive Officer on a variety of legal issues affecting the Court but focuses on labor and employment. In 2013, she served as President of the California Public Employers Labor Relations Association (CALPELRA) and has served on the Board since 2007. She also serves on the board of the Latina Lawyers Bar Association and was its President in 2012. She is a member of the California Bar Association, the Los Angeles County Bar Association, Hispanic National Bar Association, and the Association of Workplace Investigators. Ms. Peña received her J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1990, where she was the Associate Editor of the International Law Journal, and is bi-lingual/bi-literal in Spanish. Ms. Peña was appointed in December 2013, as an advisor to the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel.

**Hon. Rebecca S. Riley** has served since 2010 in the Civil Trial Division as a judge in the Superior Court of California, County of Ventura. For 14 years prior to 2010, she was assigned to the Criminal Division, the last seven years to the Criminal Trial Division, where she handled all varieties of criminal trials. She was voted Judge of the Year by the Ventura County Trial Lawyers, 2013. Judge Riley has served as faculty at Judicial College and New Judge Orientation, was a member of the Judicial Council Criminal Law Advisory Committee from 2002–2008, and was a member of the Chief Justice’s Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force (2005–2008). In 2013, Judge Riley was appointed to the Judicial Council’s Governing Committee for the California Judiciary Education and Research Center.

**Michael Roddy**, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of California, County of San Diego, has more than 30 years of court administration experience, both in the trial courts and in state court administration. Before returning to the San Diego Superior Court in January 2006, Mr. Roddy served as the Administrative Office of the Court’s Regional Administrative Director for the Northern/Central

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Region (2001–2006), Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Sacramento (1989–1994), Assistant Executive Officer (1988–1989) of the Superior Court of San Diego County, and in a variety of other administrative positions in the Superior Courts of San Diego and Los Angeles counties. He has been active on numerous Judicial Council committees including the Court Executives Advisory Committee, the Court Technology Advisory Committee, the Working Group on Court Security, the Emergency Response and Security Task Force, the Probation Services Task Force, the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Jury System Improvement, the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee, and the Center for Judicial Education and Research Governing Committee. Mr. Roddy served on the Judicial Council from 2006 to 2011.

**José H. Varela** is the Public Defender of Marin County. Mr. Varela has been on the Court Interpreter Advisory Panel for over four years and in that time helped create guidelines for video remote interpretation for ASL interpreters. Mr. Varela comes from a bilingual family and his mother once served as a court interpreter in Contra Costa County. Mr. Varela is a graduate of St. Mary’s College of California and the University of California Berkeley School of Law. He worked as a public defender in Los Angeles and San Diego counties prior to coming to Marin County. Mr. Varela has served as President of the California Public Defenders Association and continues to serve on their Board of Directors as a Past President. He has also served as a lecturer in trial skills evidence and ethics for CPDA.

**Christina M. Volkens** is the Court Executive Officer for the Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino, and Vice Chair of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel. Ms. Volkens also serves on the Access and Fairness Advisory Committee, Court Executives Advisory Committee, the Trial Court Facility Modification Advisory Committee, and the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee. Shortly after graduating from the College of Saint Thomas, Ms. Volkens began her 24 year career with the Minnesota and California court systems, and has been a long-time advisor on interpreter issues in both states. While in Minnesota, Ms. Volkens was instrumental in implementing video remote interpreting statewide. She was appointed by the Minnesota legislature to serve on the Criminal & Juvenile Information Task Force (“CrimNet”), where she served as the elected chair of that body.

**Hon. Laurie D. Zelon** has served as an Associate Justice of the California Court of Appeal, Second District, Division 7, since 2003. She was appointed as a judge to the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, in 2000. Justice Zelon has been a long-time member and served as Chair of the California Commission on Access to Justice. She is the current Chair of the Access and Fairness Advisory Committee and has served on several other statewide judicial committees addressing administration of justice issues. Justice Zelon has written articles and spoken at educational programs for judges and lawyers concerning pro bono, public service, legal ethics and legal education. Justice Zelon has been active since her admission to practice in the American Bar Association and has served as Chair of the Standing Committee on Lawyers' Public Service Responsibility, as a member of the Consortium on Law and the Public, and as Chair of its national Law Firm Pro Bono Project. From 1994 to 1997, Justice Zelon was Chair of the Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants. She earned her J.D. degree in 1977 from Harvard Law School.

More info: <http://www.courts.ca.gov/2487.htm>