



NEWS RELEASE

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Presiding Justice James Ardaiz to Retire from Fifth Appellate District

More Than 30 Years of Service as Trial and Appellate Court Judge Administrator

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Fresno—With more than 30 years of service to California as both a trial and appellate court judge administrator, Presiding Justice James A. Ardaiz will retire from the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District, at the conclusion of his term this year. Justice Ardaiz has served as the Administrative Presiding Justice of Court of Appeal, headquartered in Fresno, since August 1994.

In November 1980, Presiding Justice Ardaiz was elected as a judge to the Fresno County Municipal Court, where he served as Assistant Presiding Judge, followed by two terms as Presiding Judge. Governor Deukmejian appointed him to the Superior Court bench in 1984, and in 1988 appointed him as an Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District. In August 1994, the Chief Justice appointed him as the Administrative Presiding Justice of the court, where he has successfully served for the remainder of his career.

Justice Ardaiz expressed his gratitude to Governor Schwarzenegger for his support and that of his predecessors for providing him “with the opportunity for a memorable and incredibly satisfying career.”

Justice Brad R. Hill, his colleague on the Fifth Appellate District, noted: “Justice James Ardaiz has done an extraordinary job over the past 15 years as our Administrative Presiding Justice. When he became Presiding Justice in 1994, he instituted a number of measures that not only reduced but essentially eliminated our case backlog. He initiated and expanded our court outreach efforts. He inspired and spearheaded the construction of the court’s new building that opened in 2007.”

“He has presided over a court that is known statewide as an innovative court and as an exceptionally collegial one,” Justice Hill continued.

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“He is also highly regarded for his keen intellect and always having the courage of his convictions. He will be greatly missed by all the justices and court staff.”

Justice Ardaiz is a recipient of many awards, including the Distinguished American Award presented to him in 2008 by the Japanese American Citizens League for service to the Japanese American community by helping them obtain a memorial for a World War II detention site.

In 2004, he was honored with the Blaine Pettitt Mentor Award, given by the Fresno County Young Lawyers to an attorney or judge who has served as a role model to the legal community. The California Jurist of the Year Award was bestowed upon Justice Ardaiz in 1999 by the Judicial Council of California for judicial and administrative distinction.

During his tenure, the Fifth Appellate District received two Ralph M. Kleps Awards for judicial management, one in 1993 and another in 2003. These awards are given to courts for implementing innovative programs that benefit the courts and the public.

Chief Justice Ronald M. George appointed Justice Ardaiz as chair of several Judicial Council committees, including the Task Force on Making the Record (2002–2004), the Task Force on Judicial Elections (1996), and the Task Force on Trial Court Employees (1998–2000), which was charged with developing recommendations for a new personnel system for the state's 18,000 trial court employees as a result of the Trial Court Funding Act of 1997. Under Justice Ardaiz's leadership, the panel drafted comprehensive legislation that was signed by Governor Gray Davis in 2000 with unanimous approval of the Legislature.

Justice Ardaiz also served on the Judicial Council (1993–1996) following his appointment by Chief Justice Malcolm M. Lucas.

He is a graduate of the University of California, Hastings College of Law, where he received his juris doctorate in 1974. In 2000, Justice Ardaiz was named the Hastings College of Law Alumnus of the Year for the Fresno Hastings Alumni Association.

Following law school, he went to work for the Fresno County District Attorney's Office, and in 1977 became the Chief Deputy District Attorney of Homicide, remaining there until his election to the bench in 1981.

In addition to his judicial career, Justice Ardaiz is co-author of California Evidence, a computerized research book on evidence law in California. He has authored numerous articles about the death penalty and California's "Three Strikes" law.

Justice Ardaiz has been married for 40 years to his wife, Pam. They have three children.

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