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## **Justice Kathleen O’Leary Wins 2007 Aranda Access to Justice Award**

San Francisco—Justice Kathleen E. O’Leary, Associate Justice of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Three (Santa Ana), has been selected as the winner of the 2007 Benjamin Aranda III Access to Justice Award.

Chief Justice Ronald M. George will present the award at the Judicial Council Awards Luncheon on September 27 at the 2007 California Bench Bar Biannual Conference at the Anaheim Convention Center.

The California Commission on Access to Justice co-sponsors the Aranda Award with the Judicial Council, State Bar, and California Judges Association. The award is named for the founding chair of the Judicial Council’s Access and Fairness Advisory Committee, and it honors a trial judge or an appellate justice whose activities demonstrate a long-term commitment to improving access to justice.

“Justice O’Leary’s work has made a concrete difference in the ability of California’s residents to have meaningful access to the courts,” said Justice Laurie D. Zelon, of the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Seven (Los Angeles.) According to another colleague, Judge Erica Yew of the Superior Court of Santa Clara County, “Justice O’Leary leads with good humor, keen insight, and inspirational vision. She embodies the spirit which the Aranda Award seeks to recognize.”

Justice O’Leary began her judicial career at the West Orange County Municipal Court in 1981, where she also served as Presiding Judge and Assistant Presiding Judge. She was appointed to the Superior Court of Orange County in 1986 by Governor George Deukmejian.

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When she was elected Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of Orange County in 1998, she was the first woman to hold that position in Orange County and was one of the few female presiding judges in the state.

Because of Justice O'Leary's leadership and vision, the Superior Court of Orange County significantly increased efforts to improve access to justice. Working with her team of court leaders, the local bar, and legal services programs, she helped to create programs that allowed court users of limited means to have expanded access to court services.

Justice O'Leary was in her third term as presiding judge when she was elevated to the Court of Appeal in 1999. Her interest in access to justice continued during her service on the appellate court. When Chief Justice George created the Task Force on Self-Represented Litigants in 2000, he appointed Justice O'Leary as chair. Through her efforts, a diverse group of stakeholders developed an action plan for assisting self-represented litigants through the court process. The task force also has contributed to the development of self-help centers in state trial courts.

“Justice O'Leary's leadership has been instrumental in obtaining \$8.7 million in ongoing funding for self-help centers in the courts,” said Ms. Bonnie Hough, Supervising Attorney at the Administrative Office of the Courts' Center for Families, Children & the Courts. “This is the first ongoing funding that has ever been allocated for these services and is a huge testament to her hard work and effective advocacy for these services.”

Chief Justice George also appointed Justice O'Leary to chair the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel in 2005. California's courts have dramatically increased the number of proceedings in which interpreters are made available to litigants, an important step in improving public access to and understanding of court proceedings. Her leadership skills have been dedicated to addressing the challenges presented by the language needs of California's litigants.

As a past member and past chair of the Governing Committee of the California Center for Judicial Education and Research, Justice O'Leary has consistently worked to improve the administration of justice through comprehensive and quality education and training for judicial officers and other judicial branch personnel. In addition to teaching a number of courses for California judicial officers, judicial branch staff, law enforcement, and lawyers, she has taught courses for the judiciary of sister states, the National Center for State Courts, and the national Judicial College.

Justice O'Leary also has served as a member of the Judicial Council and on a number of other advisory committees and task forces. Her contributions to judicial administration were recognized by the Judicial Council when she was named Jurist of the Year in 1999.

A biography of Justice O'Leary is available on the California Courts Web site at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/courtsofappeal/4thDistrictDiv3/justices/oleary.htm> .

Past recipients of the Aranda Award are Justice Judith D. McConnell (1999), Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division One; Judge Veronica McBeth (2000), Superior Court of Los Angeles County; Judge Charles W. Campbell, Jr. (2001), Superior Court of Ventura County; Judge Donna J. Hitchens (2002), Superior Court of San Francisco County; Judge Kenneth M. Kawaichi (2003), Superior Court of Alameda County; Justice Earl Johnson, Jr. (2004), Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Seven; Judge Aviva K. Bobb (2005), Superior Court of Los Angeles County; and Judge Donna M. Petre (2006), Superior Court of Yolo County.

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*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*