



# NEWS RELEASE

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Public Information Office  
455 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688  
[www.courtinfo.ca.gov](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov)

415-865-7740

Lynn Holton  
Public Information Officer

## **Judicial Council Announces 2006–2007 Winners of Distinguished Service Awards**

San Francisco—The Judicial Council of California today announced the winners of its 2006–2007 Distinguished Service Awards. The awards, the highest honors given by the council, are presented to those who demonstrate extraordinary leadership and make significant contributions to the administration of justice in California.

Now in their 13th year, the awards will be presented during the 2007 California Bench Bar Biannual Conference in September. Chief Justice of California Ronald M. George and Administrative Director of the Courts William C. Vickrey will present the awards. The recipients are as follows.

### **Bernard E. Witkin Amicus Curiae Award**

*This award honors individuals other than members of the judiciary for their outstanding contributions to the courts of California.*

**Justice Sandra Day O'Connor**, retired Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, was selected for this award not only for her outstanding service on the U.S. Supreme Court but also for her vital leadership in preserving the independence of the judiciary that has helped inspire and guide the efforts of California's bench and bar issues.

Justice O'Connor has appeared throughout the nation to urge support for the independence and impartiality of the courts. In 2006, she was the keynote speaker at the 2006 California Judicial Summit, a conference sponsored by the Judicial Council.

A graduate of Stanford University Law School, Justice O'Connor had a successful career as an assistant U.S. Attorney General and later as an Arizona state senator, before she became a judge. In 1974, she won election to a state judgeship in the Superior Court of Maricopa County, Arizona, where she served for the next five years.

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In 1979, she was appointed to the Arizona Court of Appeals in 1979. There she decided appeals on subjects spanning workers' compensation, divorce, criminal convictions, torts, and real property. On August 19, 1981, President Ronald Reagan nominated her to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Senate confirmed her appointment 99–0, and Justice O'Connor took her oath of office on September 26, 1981, bringing her experience from all three branches of government. She was the only sitting justice who had been elected to public office.

### **Jurist of the Year Award**

*This award honors members of the judiciary for their extraordinary dedication to the highest principles of the administration of justice.*

**Presiding Justice Norman L. Epstein**, Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four (Los Angeles), has achieved many accomplishments as a jurist, legal scholar, judicial educator, and court leader during a distinguished professional career spanning nearly 50 years.

Justice Epstein began his legal career in 1959 as a California deputy attorney general. He served as legal counsel for California State University from 1962 to 1975, ultimately becoming vice-chancellor and general counsel. A judge for more than 30 years, he served on both the Los Angeles municipal and superior courts. In 1990 he was appointed to the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four, and in 2004 was named presiding justice.

Justice Epstein's tenure on the trial and appellate benches has been distinguished by his extraordinary knowledge of the law, thorough case preparation, effective case and calendar management, innovative judicial leadership, and collegiality within the courts he has served.

A statewide leader in judicial education, Justice Epstein has lectured at the B. E. Witkin Judicial College for more than 25 years, serving as associate dean from 1980 to 1981 and as dean from 1982 to 1983. He continues to lecture widely to judges and attorneys on criminal law, evidence, civil practice, and other topics and is co-author of leading treatises on criminal law, civil procedures, and evidence. He is the winner of the Bernard Jefferson Award for distinguished judicial education.

A member of the Judicial Council from 2001 to 2004, Justice Epstein has served on the boards of many other legal and civic organizations. His contributions to the council including chairing the Rules and Projects Committee from 2003 to 2004 and the Criminal Law Advisory Committee from 2000 to 2001.

A former chair of the Governing Committee of the Center for Judicial Education and Research, Justice Epstein also is a former member of the Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee and the committees on gender bias in the courts, economical litigation, and

appellate court staffing. He also served as a liaison member of a Judicial Council task force subcommittee on alternative dispute resolution. In addition, Justice Epstein headed the Judicial Council Appellate Court Resources Analysis Working Group, which developed a model used for determining the allocation of resources today in California courts.

### **Judicial Administration Award**

*This award honors individuals in judicial administration for significant contributions to and leadership in their profession.*

**Mr. Ken Torre**, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Contra Costa County, has demonstrated leadership and advocacy in state court administration and has made significant contributions to the Judicial Council's strategic plan by advancing access, fairness, and diversity; modernization of management and administration; and the quality of justice.

Mr. Torre is well known for his contributions in assisting with new initiatives of the state jury system, advancing improved technology in the state courts, and supporting continuing education in judicial administration.

Mr. Torre began his career in judicial administration as the calendar manager for the Superior Court of San Mateo County from 1973 to 1981. He was named the assistant executive officer of that court in 1981 and in 1985 became the executive officer. He was appointed as municipal court administrator in 1996 in Contra Costa and was in that role for 10 months before assuming his new post as the administrator for the unified municipal and superior courts in November 1996.

He was recently appointed director of Judicial Administration Programs at California State University at Sacramento, a part-time position. His goal is to create a nationally recognized master's program in judicial administration and to expand the public's awareness of the field of judicial administration as a challenging and fulfilling career path.

Mr. Torre has made numerous contributions to the Judicial Council, both as a member of the council and of its advisory committees and task forces. He is currently a member of the Court Technology Advisory Committee and the Working Group on Court Security.

He recently completed service as a member of the council's Science and the Law Steering Committee and the Court Facilities Transitional Task Force. He has also served on the Family Court Services Advisory Committee, Court Profiles Advisory Committee, Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee, Trial Court Budget Committee, Court Executives Advisory Committee, Court Technology Advisory Committee, and Judicial Branch Budget Advisory Committee.

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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 ensures leadership and excellence in court administration.*