



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA • ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Service by African-American Justices in California Courts

Public invited to state Capitol for ceremony and exhibits

SACRAMENTO—The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), in collaboration with the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC), invites the public to celebrate 50 years of service by African-American justices in California and recognize their contributions to the legal community and to ensuring that all persons have equal access to the courts.

To mark the occasion, the CLBC has produced and installed a series of educational exhibit panels featuring photographs and biographical information provided by the AOC on the 14 justices who served on appellate courts (6 are currently serving) and the 3 justices who served on the California Supreme Court. The photo exhibit will be on display in the State Capitol Second Floor Rotunda through Friday, May 6.

Administrative Director of the Courts William C. Vickrey said, “The judicial branch welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the California Legislative Black Caucus on this joint initiative. The exhibit is a wonderful recognition of the African-American men and women who have enriched California’s judiciary. We remain committed to working with our sister branches of government on efforts to ensure that California’s judicial branch reflects the rich diversity of our state’s population.”

The Senate and Assembly are both expected to further recognize this historic milestone, which also marks the 70th anniversary of the appointment of the first African-American judge in California, in floor ceremonies at the state Capitol when the Legislature returns from spring recess on Monday, April 25, 2011, at 12 noon. Senate Concurrent Resolution 38 (Price) and Assembly Concurrent Resolution 47 (Davis) have been introduced to memorialize the occasion and to call on the leadership of the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government and the greater legal, educational, and justice communities to sponsor and participate in educational and outreach activities that highlight the work of the justices of the California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal.

“The members of the California Legislative Black Caucus recognize that these brilliant trailblazers have played integral roles in securing our basic freedoms and ensuring that all Californians have access to equal justice under the law and we salute them,” said State Senator Curren D. Price, Jr., chair of the caucus.

(more)

“We would like to commend the California judicial system on this 50th Anniversary of improving diversity among those serving on the bench, said “Assembly Member Mike Davis, vice chair of the caucus. “It is important to recognize both this achievement and the service of the remarkable individuals involved. This event should serve as a reminder that African Americans can and should be involved in every level of government.”

California’s first African-American justice was Associate Justice Edwin L. Jefferson, who was appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr. Justice Jefferson served on the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four from 1961 to 1975. He was appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court by Governor Culbert Olson in 1941, becoming California’s first African-American judge. Justice Jefferson was elevated to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County by Governor Earl Warren in 1949. At his retirement in 1975, Justice Jefferson was still the only African-American justice serving on the California Courts of Appeal. Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., appointed Justice Jefferson’s brother, Bernard S. Jefferson, to succeed him.

Other historical appointments include the following:

- Associate Justice Wiley W. Manuel was the first African-American justice to serve on the California Supreme Court; he served from 1977 to 1981.
- Presiding Justice Clinton White was the first African-American presiding justice of the California Court of Appeal; he served in the First Appellate District, Division Three from 1978 to 1994.
- Presiding Justice Arleigh Maddox Woods was the first African-American female justice to serve on the California Court of Appeal; she served in the Second Appellate District, Division Four from 1980 to 1995.
- Associate Justice John Miller was the only African-American justice to have also served as a member of the California State Assembly. During his tenure in the Legislature from 1967 to 1978, he served as Assembly Minority Leader from 1970 to 1971 and was a member of the Judicial Council of California from 1974 to 1978. He was appointed to the California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., where he served from 1978 until his passing in 1985.

To view SCR 38, go to www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_0001-0050/scr_38_bill_20110412_introduced.pdf.

To view ACR 47, go to www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/acr_47_bill_20110407_introduced.pdf.

For photo opportunities or questions for the California Legislative Black Caucus, contact Fahizah Alim at 916-651-4026.

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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.