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Judicial Council Honors Achievements Of State's African-American Justices

San Francisco—The Judicial Council has unanimously approved a resolution that commends the significant achievements of the 17 African-American justices who have served, or are serving, on the California Supreme Court and California Courts of Appeal. The council took the action Friday at a public meeting here.

<http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/20110624item10.pdf> .

“These individuals are pioneers who inspire us all by their many contributions to the California judicial branch,” declared Mr. William C. Vickrey, Administrative Director of the California Courts. “They show how far we have come, and how much farther we have to go.”

“Public service in the California judiciary is an attainable goal for those who aspire to it—if they are willing to make a commitment to their careers, as evidenced by those we are honoring today,” stated Associate Justice Martin J. Jenkins, of the Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division Three. Justice Jenkins and Mr. Vickrey presented the resolution to the council with Ms. Dia Poole, Bench/Bar Communications Liaison for the AOC’s Office of Governmental Affairs.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first African-American justice and the 70th anniversary of the appointment of California’s first African-American judge. Seventy years ago, in 1941, Judge Edwin L. Jefferson was appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court by Governor Culbert Olson, becoming California’s first African-American judge—and the first African-American judge west of the Mississippi. Judge Jefferson sat on that court until 1949, when he was elevated to the Los Angeles Superior Court by Governor Earl Warren.

Fifty years ago, in 1961, Judge Jefferson became the first African-American to serve on the California Court of Appeal when he was appointed by Governor Edmund G. “Pat” Brown, Sr., to the Second

Appellate District, Division Four. He served on that court with distinction until 1975.

The resolution notes that Justice Jefferson opened the door for other historic appointments of African-American judicial pioneers in California, including Wiley W. Manuel, who became the first African-American justice of the California Supreme Court (1977–1981); Clinton White, who became the first African-American presiding justice of a California Court of Appeal, heading Division Three of the First Appellate District (1978–1994); and Arleigh Maddox Woods, the first African-American woman appointed to the Court of Appeal, serving as an associate justice in Division Four of the Second Appellate District (1980–1982) and as presiding justice (1982–1995).

The resolution calls upon “the leadership of the judicial, legal, and justice community—including courts, bar associations, universities, law schools, legal aid providers, and others—to recognize and celebrate the occasion of these 50th and 70th anniversary historic milestones and to pursue opportunities to continue the dialogue on the need for ongoing efforts to enhance diversity within the judiciary.”

A photographic exhibit of African-American justices, titled “And Justice For All,” will be on display in the Great Hall of the Hiram Johnson Building, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, from June 20 through July 14. There will be a public ceremony on Thursday, July 7, at 1:30 p.m. to further recognize the 50th anniversary. The exhibit is a collaborative project of the California Legislative Black Caucus and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The public is also invited to view “African-Americans in the California Courts,” an exhibit created by the California Judicial Center Library, which is currently on display in glass cases in the Archives Room—immediately outside of the Clerk of the Court’s offices in the Earl Warren Building, 350 McAllister Street, San Francisco.

A list of African-American justices who have served, or are serving, on the California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal follows.

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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.

CALIFORNIA AFRICAN-AMERICAN JUSTICES BY DATES OF SERVICE

Hon. Edwin L. Jefferson,* Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four, 1961–1975

Hon. Bernard S. Jefferson,* Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division One, 1975–1980

Hon. Wiley W. Manuel,* Associate Justice, California Supreme Court, 1977–1981

Hon. Clinton W. White,* Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division Three, 1978–1994

Hon. John J. Miller,* Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division Two, 1978–1985

Hon. Arleigh Maddox Woods (Ret.), Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four, 1980–1995

Hon. Vaino H. Spencer (Ret.), Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division One, 1980–2007

Hon. Allen E. Broussard,* Associate Justice, California Supreme Court, 1981–1991

Hon. Leon Thompson,* Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Seven, 1982–1988

Hon. Vance W. Raye, Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District, 1991-present

Hon. Janice Rogers Brown, Associate Justice, California Supreme Court, 1996–2005, and Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District, 1994–1996 (Currently serving as a federal judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit)

Hon. Candace D. Cooper (Ret.), Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Eight, 1999–2008

Hon. Henry E. Needham, Jr., Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division Five, 2007-present

Hon. Martin J. Jenkins, Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division Three, 2008-present

Hon. Jeffrey W. Johnson, Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division One, 2009-present

Hon. William J. Murray, Jr., Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District, 2010-present

Hon. Carol D. Codrington, Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two, 2011-present

* Deceased