

*Ruthe Catolico Ashley, Esq.*

President/Founder  
DIVERSITY MATTERS CONSULTING

July 22, 2012

The Honorable Tani Cantil-Sakauye, Chair  
Judicial Council of California  
350 McAllister Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4797

Dear Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye:

This letter is in response to the Strategic Evaluation Committee Report (SEC) submitted to the Judicial Council of California. Since 1986, the American Bar Association has focused on diversity in the profession. The same has happened in the State Bar of California. As a profession, we have learned that a diverse bar is vital to the representation and advocacy for the people of California. We also recognize that the demographics of our great state are changing rapidly. We are now a minority majority state and have been so for at least a few years.

As chair of the Diversity Pipeline Task Force of the State Bar of California in 2006, I formed four working groups to focus on different parts of the pipeline. The Courts group, chaired by Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte, planned and held the first Judicial Diversity Summit in California. We found at that time that there were no programs or initiatives focused on diversifying the judiciary. Since that time, much has been done in educating the public and the profession on the importance of a diverse judiciary. A failure to have a diverse profession and judiciary severely impacts the credibility and faith in our legal system by the public that we serve. The work of the Diversity Pipeline Task Force was institutionalized in the creation of the Council on Access and Fairness. Diversity in the judiciary remains an important goal of this Council..

As the Judicial Council reviews the SEC Report and determines what needs to be restructured, we urge the Council to be mindful of the work that has been ongoing in the area of diversity in the legal profession in the past few years. We are making small steps forward and the Council's voice in supporting your Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan is important for this work to continue.

As a policy matter, it is incumbent that the Judicial Council support ongoing resources and qualified staff to ensure the effective implementation of diversity programs and initiatives. If the bench and bar are to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the judicial system, we must strive to do all we can to utilize the best talent in a diverse population and to build that pipeline into the profession.

As former Chief Justice George commented at the first Diversity Judicial Summit held in collaboration with the State Bar of California in 2006:

*"In my view, a diverse bench not only will maintain and enhance our state's tradition of having an excellent judiciary, but will also serve to reinforce our guiding principle – that we are committed to making our justice system fair and accessible to all."*

Thank you for this opportunity to make comment in response to the SEC report. We have full confidence that the Judicial Council will continue to live and act on its commitment to providing fair and equal access to justice for a very diverse state. :

With sincere appreciation for the continuing commitment to the people of California,

*Ruthe C. Ashley*

Ruthe Catolico Ashley, President/Founder  
Diversity Matters