

# CONTRA COSTA LAWYER

Volume 38, Number 1 | January 2025



Above, Contra Costa County Superior Court Presiding Judge Christopher Bowen welcomes incoming CCCBA Board President Sutter Selleck.



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# CONTRA COSTA LAWYER

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**On the Cover:** Incoming Presiding Judge Christopher Bowen and Incoming CCCBA Board President Sutter Selleck welcome one another at a recent CCCBA event. The other members of the 2025 CCCBA Board of Directors include:

Michael Pierson, President Elect, Pa'tanisha Davis Pierson, Secretary, Jonathan Lee, Treasurer

David Pearson, Immediate Past President, and Board Members Punita Bhasin, Ann Harding Battin

Ariel Brownell Lee, Ray Robinson, Kristen Busby  
 Emily Nashban, Rachel Margolis Chapman, Ritzi Lam, Samantha Sepehr and Indy Colbath.

See the article on page 19 for profiles of those new to the Board.

# Accomplishments and New Faces of the Court



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Melissa  
O'Connell



Hon.  
Stephanie  
Clarke



Hon.  
Nichelle  
Holmes



Hon.  
Jesse  
Hsieh



Hon.  
Michael  
Nieto



Hon.  
Robert  
Leach

## by Hon. Ed Weil, Presiding Judge 2023-2024

In the terms of my two most recent predecessors as Presiding Judge, we were in the throes of the COVID pandemic. We implemented the Odyssey system and the direct calendar for felonies. COVID remains an issue, but nothing like it was. Odyssey has now expanded into all of the divisions of the court and staff has mastered the switch from the old case management to the new Odyssey method.

Use of remote technology has not only kept us healthier, but has enabled counsel and litigants to much more efficiently argue and participate in their cases. Most recently, courtrooms are being better equipped to handle “hybrid” hearings, i.e., those in which some participants are in the courtroom while others participate by remote technology, with those people able to see the judge, witness, and attorneys.

## Passing the Gavel

In 2023, five of our judges retired.

In 2024, three more retired: Judges Clare Maier, Jill Fannin, and Susanne Fenstermacher.

But the Governor has responded by appointing four judges in 2023 and six more in 2024. In 2024, we have sworn in Judges Melissa O'Connell, Stephanie Clarke, Nichelle Holmes, Jesse Hsieh, Michael Nieto, and Robert Leach.

Judge O'Connell comes to us from the Northern California Innocence Project at Santa Clara University. Stephanie Clarke comes to us from the 1<sup>st</sup> District Appellate Project. Nichelle Holmes was a Deputy District Attorney here in Contra Costa County. Jesse Hsieh came primarily from the Contra Costa Public Defender's Office. Michael Nieto was a long-time Deputy District Attorney in Alameda County. Robert Leach was most recently an Assistant United States Attorney for the Northern District of California. With the swearing in of Robert Leach, we actually have no judicial vacancies, for the first time in many years. This may be short-lived, however, as more judges will retire in 2024. The bottom line is that 14 of our 38 judges have less than three years' experience on the bench. But they're an outstanding and diverse group, and will serve the court and the community well.

## The Budget

Last January, the Governor proposed a budget for the courts for Fiscal Year 24-25, which did not include a net reduction for the judicial branch. Unfortunately, the economic predictions on which it was based turned out to be too rosy. By the time of the “May Revise,” the statewide budget included a nearly 8% reduction. Courts were not spared, and received an across-the-board cut of \$97 million statewide. This was the final budget. It resulted in a direct cut to our court of \$1.7 million. This required some cutbacks, including leaving some staff positions vacant, but we have managed the reduction without layoffs or furloughs. Some of our neighboring courts have not been so fortunate.

I'm honored to have had the opportunity to serve as Presiding Judge for 2023 and 2024. Judge Christopher Bowen will take over as Presiding Judge for 2025 and 2026. Judge Joni Hiramoto has been elected as Assistant Presiding Judge, and will serve as Presiding Judge in 2027 and 2028.

# INSIDE

## 2025, a Year of Change, Advancement & Efficiency

by Jody Iorns, CCCBA Executive Director



It seems like only yesterday that we were celebrating a new century (party like it's 1999!) and here we are, a quarter of the way through it already. Welcome 2025!

CCCBA is facing a year that will bring change, advancement, and much needed efficiency. With the challenges of diminishing engagement, rising costs of doing business, and a still unsettled business landscape, we are challenged to ensure we are positioned to weather these realities and continue to provide the excellent service our community has come to expect. We are confident that with the support of our Board of Directors guided by President Sutter Selleck and enhanced by six new Directors, along with our incredibly involved and supportive community (you all!), we will experience great success despite the challenges!

One of the biggest changes we are implementing this year is a new website/database. Starting in March, we will be building on a platform known as MemberCentral. This Association Management Software (AMS) is utilized by many of our sister bar organizations throughout the country with great satisfaction. The MemberCentral AMS is an integrated website/database through which we will continue to offer our Lawyer Referral and Information Services, event calendar and registration process, court profiles, community activities, member-centered portals, as highlights. In addition, we will be adding an on-demand learning module from which it will be more convenient to find and track the MCLE credit courses you need and/or have taken. We believe the member-focused interface is also a significant improvement to the database we currently use and hope that you find it more intuitive, inviting and visually pleasing. We anticipate going live in early June! Updates will follow.

In addition to a new database, late this year we will bring back the printed membership directory. And therefore, with both the printed directory and new website, we

anticipate that many of our members might be interested in an upgraded head shot! We are working to bring that opportunity to each of our members sometime in the first quarter of 2025. We'll keep you posted so be sure to stay up to date with our weekly emails!

When I started with CCCBA in 2022, someone to whom I had introduced myself and CCCBA said, "Oh, that's the fun bar!" And I have come to learn the truth of that statement. Staying faithful to that reputation, we already have 34 events and programs scheduled for 2025 and we are likely to add more! As usual, these events and programs are designed to enhance your professional networks, support continued education, and simply provide joy and fun. We hope to see many of you at these events and, as usual, sponsorships are available for consideration.

Finally, and most importantly, CCCBA is also looking forward to another successful year of partnership with our bench under the new leadership of Presiding Judge Christopher Bowen. Leading an ever-diversified bench of thoughtful, caring, committed, and ethical jurists, we consider ourselves honored to have a strong relationship with the Contra Costa Superior Court bench.

Please enjoy this issue where we highlight the new board members, CCCBA staff, honor the new bench officers and much more. As you will see, we have many reasons to be confident in our success for 2025.

**Jody Iorns** is the Executive Director of the CCCBA and of Contra Costa County Justice for All.

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# Have You Seen the New Hi-Tech Courtrooms?

By Kate Bieker, CEO of Superior Court of Contra Costa

“Our new hi-tech courtrooms have allowed the court to seamlessly conduct hybrid hearings,” states Supervising Judge Danielle Douglas. This past year the court endeavored to equip courtrooms in the Spinetta Family Law and Wakefield Taylor courthouses with state-of-the-art technology and will be doing the same for the Bray and Annex Courtrooms in 2025!

The incorporation of advanced technology into our courtrooms, what we referred to as “hi-tech courtrooms,” has helped the court to achieve its mission and vision through enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and fairness. These innovations are providing benefits to all parties involved, including our judges, attorneys, witnesses, and of course the public.

With this advanced technology installed, video conferencing capabilities allows for increased remote hearings, making it easier to schedule and manage cases without requiring all parties to be physically present. This has saved valuable time, where witnesses, litigants and others involved in matters are located far away. Remote hearings enable individuals who may have mobility issues, transportation issues, or live in remote areas to participate in trials without needing to travel. Also, it is very helpful for those involved who do not have to take a full day off work. This has also helped to ensure that legal

proceedings are not delayed due to the absence of key participants.

Some of the technology in the hi-tech courtrooms include 65”/85” smart displays (really large TV’s), microphones throughout the courtroom, including hand-held mics for easy movement throughout the courtroom, speakers in every corner as well as display screens on counsel tables and witness stands. One of the most notable benefits of hi-tech courtrooms is the ability to present evidence more effectively. The technology allows for the seamless integration of multimedia, such as digital documents, photographs, videos, and animations. This can help juries and judges better understand complex evidence, making it easier for them to follow the arguments presented. Judge Douglas states, “The hi-tech courtrooms have enhanced the ability of jurors to see and hear exhibits in the courtroom. and saved litigants money by not having to bring in their own hi-tech equipment.”

While setting up a hi-tech courtroom has required the court to make an initial investment, the long-term savings are significant. The reduction in paper use, travel expenses for witnesses, and delays in proceedings leads to a more cost-effective system. Additionally, by speeding up case processing and reducing backlogs, hi-tech courtrooms can and have resulted in fewer costs to all involved.

Remote testimony, interpreting and available court reporting can also cut down on the costs associated with bringing all these participants from distant locations. Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is a massive benefit to the hi-tech courtrooms.

The court is facing an increasing demand for interpreters in various languages, services that can be very expensive, given travel and lodging expenses. With the implementation of the hi-tech courtroom, VRI allows for better coordination of interpreters on scheduled dates without delay or travel. VRI makes the process more affordable for the court as well as for clients.

The integration of this technology into courtrooms represents a significant upgrade and much-needed advance for the court. Hi-tech courtrooms improve efficiency, accessibility, transparency, and security while reducing costs and environmental impacts. As technology continues to evolve, so too will the potential for further improvements in courtroom practices, benefiting all those who utilize the Contra Costa justice system. Supervising Judge Douglas states, “Overall the hi-tech courtrooms in Contra Costa have increased access to justice by allowing attorneys and litigants who may not live locally to appear remotely while allowing parties or citizens to be present in the courtroom and still be able to hear and see remotely-appearing parties.”

A special thank you to the court staff who have been exceptionally wonderful in learning how to utilize the new technology, some becoming experts and trainers for others. Court staff is remarkable and we are grateful!

## FEATURE:

# Interview with 2025 CCCBA President, Sutter Selleck: A Passionate Advocate for Change

by Jody Iorns

Sutter Selleck, a solo practitioner at S.C. Selleck Law, has dedicated their career to advocating for the rights of diverse communities. With a focus on Estate Planning, Probate, Will & Trust Litigation, and Elder Law, Sutter's journey into law is deeply intertwined with their personal experiences and aspirations for societal change. I had an opportunity to dive a bit more into the "Sutter behind the resume" and am honored to share highlights of the interview.

## About Sutter and their Family

Sutter shares a glimpse into their life, highlighting their role as a parent to a spirited 7-year-old daughter named Merritt. Alongside their daughter, Sutter enjoys the company of two beloved dogs, Griffith and Tilden. They emphasize the importance of chosen family, which includes close friends who have become like siblings: Missy, Uncle Davey, and Uncle Teddie. This network of support reflects Sutter's belief in the power of community and connection.

## Background and Education

Sutter's academic journey is as diverse as their professional pursuits. They earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from UCLA,

followed by a Master's in Education from Pepperdine University, and a Juris Doctorate from Western State University. With over 11 years of practice under their belt, Sutter has been a member of the CCCBA Board of Directors since 2015 and served on the Contra Costa County Advisory Council on Aging from 2016 to 2022.

## Joys Outside of their Legal Work

When not immersed in legal matters, Sutter embraces a variety of hobbies that enrich their life. They love to travel, kayak, and attend live music concerts, reliving cherished memories with Merritt. Comic books, murder podcasts, and documentaries also pique their interest, alongside a passion for tattoos and trivia games. Karaoke is a favorite pastime, showcasing Sutter's vibrant personality and love for fun.

## Inspiration Behind Pursuit of a Career in Law

Sutter's journey into law was shaped by the cultural landscape of their youth. Growing up during a time when high-profile legal cases were televised, they became captivated by the power and potential positive impact offered by the legal system. Watching trials like that of



O.J. Simpson and learning about landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* ignited a desire to make a difference. Sutter recalls a pivotal moment in second grade, inspired by a picture of Sandra Day O'Connor, which solidified their ambition to contribute to history and effect change through law.

## Motivations for Becoming Involved with CCCBA

As a native of Contra Costa County, Sutter recognized the importance of being active in their community and professional organizations. Joining the Contra Costa County Bar Association (CCCBA) was a way they found to enhance their effectiveness as a lawyer and community member. Sutter's commitment to the CCCBA reflects their dedication to fostering connections and collaboration within the legal field.

## Initiatives Taken while on the Board of Directors

During their tenure on the CCCBA Board of Directors, Sutter has been instrumental in implementing various programming initiatives and revamping the association's website. Their focus on commu-



nity engagement and outreach has been a driving force in their efforts to strengthen the bar association's ties with non-legal organizations, fostering strategic partnerships that benefit the community.

### Accolades Received During their Career

Sutter's dedication to their work has not gone unnoticed. They have been recognized as a Super Lawyer Rising Star since 2017 and received the Diablo Magazine's 40 under 40 Award in 2019, along with the California Lawyers Association Solo & Small Section Excellence in Service Award. These accolades reflect Sutter's commitment to excellence and their impact on the legal community.

### Looking Ahead to 2025, Goals for the CCCBA During their Presidency

Sutter envisions a future where the CCCBA plays a pivotal role in building community involvement. Their goal is to create meaningful connections between the bar association, lawyers, and non-legal organizations, ultimately enhancing the impact of their collective efforts. Sutter believes that through collaboration, they can drive positive change and create a more inclusive legal landscape.

### Greatest Accomplishment

For Sutter, the greatest accomplishment in life is being a parent to Merritt. Their journey as a transgender individual has fueled a passion for advocating for under-represented and marginalized groups. Sutter's commitment to social justice and community engagement is evident in their work and personal life, as they strive to create a more equitable world for all.

### Conclusion

Sutter Selleck's journey is a testament to the power of advocacy, community, and personal connection. Through their work in law and their commitment to social change, Sutter continues to inspire others to join the fight for justice and equality. As they look to the future, Sutter remains dedicated to making a lasting impact in both the legal profession and the broader community.



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# Going to Small Claims Court with

by Comm. Lowell Richards, Ret.



JusticeDirect



I heard thousands of small claims cases over some 30 years as a Commissioner or Judge Pro Tem. But when the need came for me to file my own case, I suddenly realized that the paperwork side of a case was way outside of my comfort zone. Besides, almost five years had passed since I last participated in any part of the process. I needed help.

What had happened to me involved the purchase of a motor home. Along with the RV came several offers for extended warranties, roadside services, and other extras. The price for these services added only a small amount to a sizeable monthly payment and seemed like a good investment at the time. Besides, the dealer said, "If you decide to cancel these within 60 days you can get a full refund of the costs." I confirmed the cancellation clauses in each agreement and went ahead with the additions. Later, I realized that most of the coverages were duplicated by other, less expensive policies. The worst part was that if I sold the RV in a reasonably short time the actual \$12,000 cost of the policies on my loan would put the RV "under water" on the loan principal.

A few days short of the 60-day period I wrote separate cancellation letters for each policy to the dealer and to each insurance company (where that was required). I sent each by UPS with return receipts and waited for a response.

Within a month each insurance

company involved refunded the correct amount to the loan company as a principal reduction. The dealer, however, neither paid nor even responded to my letters, leaving about a balance due of about \$5,500. I sent a second, and then a third letter. Still no response. Ok, time to go to small claims court.

I went to the court's web site, where there is an excellent self-help section. The information and help offered there was good and accurate, but I really wanted more assistance with the paperwork preparation than it offers. Then I remembered JusticeDirect, the small claims assistance service offered by the Contra Costa County Bar Association. I clicked on the link in the CCCBA's web site for JusticeDirect. Taking that small step led to an amazing experience.

Without giving actual legal advice, JusticeDirect literally put a staff of paralegals at my disposal to handle all of the investigative leg work, pleading preparation, court filing, process service, evidence collection, and trial preparation. At each step along the way, I was prompted with complete information about what needed to happen, the decision to be made, and any data I needed to make that decision.

The first thing that happened was a set of communications that explained the process and what they could offer in services. The most important of these was that they could compose a demand letter for me, if I had not already taken that

step. Best of all, there was no charge for this! I answered a very thorough questionnaire covering the particulars of my grievance and the identification of the defendant. The letter they composed was excellent and met all of the requirements of a good demand letter. Since that step was already behind me, I went on to the filing step.

Based on the nature of my case and the amounts involved, the cost to use their service would be \$219. In addition to their services, the filing fee and personal process service would cost \$135. I paid the costs and fees with a credit card, and we were under way.

The team from JusticeDirect started by making a search of three separate databases to determine if I had the correct defendant. As it turns out, the dealer is actually a subsidiary of a larger company based in Minnesota. They gave no advice as to who the named defendant should be but gave me all of the information needed to make that decision. I decided to sue the dealer DBA the larger company, because it could bring pressure on the dealer from above to promote settlement.

The staff of JusticeDirect was so complete and thorough that it was almost overkill. I was reminded of each deadline and next step to be taken. I uploaded all evidence, which they assembled into evidence packets. There was one for me, one for the defendant as discovery, and another for presentation to the judge in trial.

They made sure that all court filings were made on time. Before filing each pleading, a copy would be emailed to me, approved by me, and then filed electronically. A filed / endorsed copy of each pleading was emailed to me as soon as they received it from the court. I was also directed to instructional articles and videos that explained each step

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of the process. I was amazed at the accuracy and thoroughness of the information they provided.

The result of the effort was that refunds from the dealer started appearing on my loan statement. They still didn't contact me directly until two weeks before the trial date. The dealer's general manager called me to confirm the final amount due. They sent me a check for the remaining amount due and I had JusticeDirect file a dismissal. I was reimbursed in full, including the costs of suit.

The bottom line is that JusticeDirect was an outstanding resource for even an experienced law practitioner. Just imagine the godsend it would be to a person who knows nothing about the legal system. I wish it had been around when I was an active attorney. I would have had a great referral for those folks who came to

me with what was obviously a small claims problem. Referring them to this CCCBA resource would have made them more likely to come to me when a serious problem arose. I highly recommend JusticeDirect as a very effective tool for a small claims litigant, and as a great referral resource for attorneys.



**Commissioner Lowell Richards (Ret.)**

*served in Contra Costa County Superior Court from 2001-2019 in traffic, small claims, civil harassment and unlawful detainers. Prior to that he served as Judge Pro-tem in the Pittsburg Municipal Court from 1995-2001. Before his work as an attorney, he was a professional musician, a music arranger, computer engineer, a pilot and flight instructor. He holds six U.S. and six world aviation records.*



# The Success of E-Filing at the Court and a Few Facts

by Kate Bieker

E-Filing at the Superior Court of Contra Costa County went live on June 18, 2022, and has been incredibly successful. At each of our court locations we are dedicated to enhancing the efficiency and accessibility of our legal processes. E-Filing is available 24 hours, 7 days a week, for filings that comply with Standing Order 3.4. We have experienced clerks at each location dedicated to managing the E-Filing queues during normal business hours. We encourage you to explore E-Filing as a way to file documents.

Even after two years, we continue to add items for E-Filing as well as venture into new areas. E-Filing has allowed the Court to use technology such as “ques” that expedite court processes. The number of E-Filings continue to grow! I thought it would be interesting to start with some statistics. Keep in mind that an “envelope” can contain just one filing or up to 20+ filings that need to be processed.

It’s very important to remember that every filing must be reviewed and filed by a Court Clerk. Yes, they are entered into the E-filing system, but they are not automatically filed in the Court’s case management system. Every filing in an envelope must be touched and processed.

**The statistics below are for January 1 through October 31, 2024:**

- E-Filings received on a Saturday in 2024 – 3,104 envelopes
- E-Filings received on a Sunday in 2024 – 1,802 envelopes

MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
25,887	30,028	29,404	28,919	27,343	3,104	1,802

- E-Filings received on a Court holiday in 2024 – 2,172 envelopes
- E-Filings received **after** 5 pm and **before** 8:00 am in 2024 (after the Court has closed) – 36,000 envelopes out of 146,487 total envelopes or 25% of that total filings
- Average Time to Review – 5 business days

Each unit takes great pride in the strides they have taken to manage this new component of their Clerk’s Office and are always looking for ways to help this process for all involved and have offered some tips below!

### **Probate/Civil (Room 103) – Andrew Adams, Court Operations Manager II**

The Civil Clerk’s office is dedicated to ensuring all filings are filed quickly and efficiently. The Civil department has created a separate E-Filing unit to address the large volume of filings. We do a daily review of all submissions to ensure that documents for upcoming hearings are processed timely and are available to the judges for review. We have dedicated staff assigned to each Civil department to ensure they are familiar with the cases and can more easily process the submissions. If you are calling the clerk’s office to discuss a filing, please be sure to have the envelope number ready so we can more readily assist with any issues.

### **Small Claims and Unlawful Detainers ~ Andrew Adams, Sarah Passot & Chelsea Fox, Court Operations Managers II**

Our E-Filing system for Small Claims and Unlawful Detainer cases plays a crucial role in streamlining document management, allowing for faster and more efficient resolutions. Our clerks are often engaged in E-Filing documents, managing phone inquiries, processing mailed-in documents and assisting in-person customers. When documents are E-Filed, our system immediately registers the submission and routes it to the designated work queue. This can occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Documents are prioritized due to the time-sensitive nature of the filing while honoring the date of receipt. Our three dedicated teams at each location aim to process each submission in a timely manner. Through E-Filing and dedicated clerks, we have been able to eliminate all backlog and ensure timely processing for all Unlawful Detainer and Small Claims filings.

The Court’s E-Filing system has created more access for litigants in Small Claims and Unlawful Detainers. Litigants representing themselves are not required to use E-Filing, but have it available to them. The assigned court staff at all three locations (Richmond, Pittsburg

and Martinez) manage helping litigants in person, on the phone and balance that with processing all the E-Filing submissions received. All E-Filing clerks check to ensure completeness and accuracy, checking that each document adheres to the Local Rules, California Rules of Court, and the Code of Civil Procedure prior to accepting the filing. Thanks to the hard work of those clerks, we have been able to eliminate all backlog.

### **Some documents are rejected. Here are the most common reasons:**

1. Submissions are incomplete and are missing required information or signatures.
2. Cases have been consolidated and documents have been submitted into a subordinate case.
3. The party filing has a fee waiver, but that payment option was not selected. The court cannot change this for you.
4. An incorrect document type has been submitted (not flattened PDFs) and the court system will not accept them.
5. The document is a duplicate submission of a previously filed document.

### **Family Law/DCSS – Antwana Fortenberry, Court Operations Manager II**

With mandatory Court E-Filing system in much of Family law and Department of Child Support Services cases for attorneys, Family Law has made some important changes in how we manage the increased volume effectively. Family Law created an actual E-Filing Unit that consists of a lead and four staff members. They focus solely on E-Filing daily. We also implemented daily triage for priority hearings, which improves efficiency and ensures timely handling of critical cases with upcoming hearings and better management for the court rooms as well. To ensure priority filings, the next hearing date, if within a month, should be listed in the filing description. The court found many rejections were related to the omission of assessing fees when submitting the filing. The court has been able to fix the error when accepting the filing, so the number of rejections has significantly decreased.

### **Criminal – Sarah Passot, Chelsea Fox and Christina Flores – Court Operations Managers II**

Permissive E-Filing is available for the Criminal and Juvenile case types as of November 23, 2023, offering a streamlined and efficient process for managing and

Continued on page 14 ►

## E-Filing

Continued from page 13

filing documents. With E-Filing, our justice partners can now:

- Submit documents anytime, from anywhere, reducing the need for in-person filings.
- Receive quicker confirmation of filings, allowing for more efficient case progression.
- Receive real-time access to filed documents.

### Reasons for Rejecting:

Despite our best efforts to streamline the E-Filing process, there are several common reasons why documents may be rejected. Understanding these reasons can help users prepare their filings correctly and avoid delays. Here are some key factors that may lead to rejection:

#### Incomplete/Incorrect Information

- Submissions lacking or missing essential details, such as case numbers, party names, or contact information, may be rejected for being incomplete.

#### Improper Formatting

- Documents must adhere to specific formatting guidelines in our Local Rules, including font size, margins, and document type (e.g., PDF). Failure to comply can result in rejection.

#### Duplicate Filings

- If a document has already been filed for a case, submitting a duplicate may lead to rejection to avoid redundancy in the case record.

#### Missing Signatures

- Legal documents often require signatures from the parties

involved. If a signature is missing or not properly notarized, the filing may be rejected.

#### Missing/Incorrect Filing Fees

- Submissions that do not include filing fees or the correct filing fees or payment information can be rejected. Users should verify fee amounts and ensure payments are processed.

#### Appeals Unit ~ Elissa Chambers, Court Operations Manager II

E-Filing for the Appeals unit is going well! Once the filings arrive in our queue, we are generally able to address the filings within one to two business days. A helpful reminder: please be sure to pick the correct filing code for the document that you are filing! We recently received four Limited Civil answers in our queue because they were titled "Notice of Appeal" by the filing party. This delays your documents being filed in a timely manner when the incorrect code is selected.

By being aware of these common reasons for rejection, users can ensure their documents are prepared correctly, reducing the chances of delays in their cases. Our court staff is always available to provide guidance and support to help navigate the E-Filing process.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to advance our services to the community we serve.

*Kate Bieker is CEO of the Superior Court of Contra Costa County.*

Contra Costa County Bar Association

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Each year we receive over 9,000 calls through our Lawyer Referral & Information line from potential clients seeking referral to an attorney. Registered attorneys receive referrals on a rotating basis for panels they choose, including:

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# Bowles & Verna LLP

## Mediation Services

Bowles & Verna is pleased to announce that partners Rich Ergo and Brad Bowles are expanding their practice to serve as mediators. Both have vast litigation experience representing clients throughout the U.S. for matters ranging from seven to nine figures exposure in various practice areas, including commercial disputes, product liability, wrongful death and catastrophic injury. In addition to decades of litigation experience, Mr. Ergo and Mr. Bowles have received specialized mediation training and certification from Cornell University.

Mr. Ergo has 41 years' experience, with a particular emphasis in representing manufacturers in product liability, commercial and regulatory matters. As national counsel for product companies, he has represented clients in lawsuits throughout the United States. While he represents domestic manufacturers, Mr. Ergo also has represented numerous companies located in Asia and regularly travels to Asia.

To see Mr. Ergo's full biography, click on <https://www.bowlesverna.com/attorney/ergo-richard-a/>

Mr. Bowles has 25 years' experience in representing plaintiffs in personal injury matters, specializing in wrongful death and catastrophic injury matters. He routinely represents clients in state and federal courts throughout California, including as court-approved Class Counsel. He also represents clients in courts throughout the U.S. in individual actions, multi-district litigation and class actions.

To see Mr. Bowles' full biography, click on <https://www.bowlesverna.com/attorney/bowles-bradley-r/>

Mr. Ergo and Mr. Bowles are available for virtual mediations throughout the U.S., as well as in-person mediations, including mediations at their Walnut Creek office in the San Francisco Bay Area. Bowles & Verna is pleased to offer these services without an administrative fee.

For more information, please contact Rich Ergo at [rergo@bowlesverna.com](mailto:rergo@bowlesverna.com), Brad Bowles at [bbowles@bowlesverna.com](mailto:bbowles@bowlesverna.com) or Legal Assistant, Kathy Trujillo, at [ktrujillo@bowlesverna.com](mailto:ktrujillo@bowlesverna.com).





## The CCCBA Staff

# Two Truths and a Lie



### Jennifer Comages

Jennifer started working for the Bar Association on May 1, 1979 and has had the pleasure of working with many Executive Directors and a variety of co-workers. She has also seen newer attorney members get involved and the older ones step down and retire.

Jennifer wears many hats while performing her job at the CCCBA. Primarily, Jennifer assists members in all matters involving their membership with the CCCBA, such as ensuring their contact information is current. During membership renewal time, Jennifer assists anyone who may have a question or instructs them on how to renew. Jennifer also works closely with the administrators at the Sustaining Law Firms. Other duties include answering the Lawyer Referral Information Service phone calls and referring them to the attorney panelists (by the way, more attorneys joining the LRIS would be beneficial).

Jennifer is married to her husband Gabriel, and they have three grown sons. One son is married, and they have a wonderful autistic grandson. Jennifer's parents lived with her and her husband until her father passed away in 2021, and her mother, who lived with Multiple Sclerosis for over 32 years, passed away in 2022. Jennifer also has a disabled sister who lives with them as well. Jennifer manages all of this while maintaining her sanity, though sometimes unsure how. Jennifer hopes to retire at some point to enjoy some fun and relaxing days.



Two truths and one lie:

- I have been married for 42 years.
- I am a mother of twins.
- I'm legally adopted.

### Barbara Arsedo



Barbara has worked at the CCCBA for over 17 years. She is the Director of the Lawyer Referral Service as well as the Moderate Means program. She is recognized nationally as an expert for LRIS and serves on the ABA LRIS Committee. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family in Brentwood and traveling with her husband.

Two truths and one lie:

- In addition to my job with CCCBA, I am also a registered nurse.
- I have five grandchildren.
- I was born and raised in San Francisco.

Continued on page 18 ►

## Two Truths

Continued from page 17

### Carole Lucido:



You may know me for sending you so many emails! And you might not even recognize me without a camera in hand. Since I joined the CCCBA nine years ago, I've also been responsible for producing the Contra Costa Lawyer magazine, keeping the website up to date, publicizing events, working with Sarah Marin on social media, making flyers and posters and managing the member benefit program. I've worked in communications and marketing for many years and had my own marketing and graphic design business. Something I especially enjoy about my job is the opportunity to get to know CCCBA members and celebrate their accomplishments and achievements. If you have something you'd like to share, drop me a note and I will try to include it in the Tuesday eblast or in Contra Costa Lawyer magazine.

Two truths and one lie:

- I am pretty good at riding a unicycle.
- As a child, I dreamed of being a mogul.
- I am the oldest of four.



### Sarah Marin

Sarah has been with the CCCBA since November 2022. As the Development and Programs Manager, she supports the 20 Sections and is in charge of securing sponsorships for the bar's events and programs. You will find her on many of the Zoom webinars and in-person events. In addition, Sarah manages the CCCBA's social media accounts, which is a great way to promote events and engage with members. Outside of work, she is a mom of two little boys, ages 4 and 2. She enjoys reading, cooking, and, well, being a mom!

Two truths and one lie:

- I have never travelled outside of the country.
- I plan to homeschool my children.
- I am allergic to peaches.



### Sara Chakri

Sara is the Education and Events Manager for CCCBA. She started with CCCBA in April of 2024 supporting the LRIS line and was promoted to her current position in July of 2024. Born and raised in Italy to Moroccan parents, Sara has a deep appreciation for culture, community, and connection. Fluent in three languages and passionate about travel, she loves exploring new places and fostering relationships. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, biking, pottery, and caring for plants. Sara is committed to personal growth, creative expres-

sion, and making a positive impact in their community.

Two truths and one lie:

- I have eaten grasshoppers, and they are delicious!
- I've swum with sea turtles.
- I don't like pizza.

### Noemi Espinoza



Noemi was born and raised in Napa and joined the CCCBA team in May 2024 as the Finance and Operations Manager. I've always had a passion for numbers and problem-solving (I know, not everyone shares that!). Outside of work, she loves traveling to new places, spending time outdoors and appreciating beautiful sunsets by the beach.

Two truths and one lie:

- I'm the oldest of four.
- I love the beach.
- I have a total of eight nieces and nephews.

### Drew Iorns



Drew serves as the Administrative and Operations Specialist for the CCCBA. He has been with the Bar for almost two years (February!). He enjoys the work he does through the Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) program, learning about law and the different lives people live, hearing so many different stories, and trying to find the best resolution for them. Drew also serves as the bar's

tech extraordinaire, supporting the CCCBA IT and systems in the office. You will often see him manning the IT at various CCCBA functions. Outside of CCCBA, Drew has a rich social life and enjoys gaming.

Two truths and one lie:

- I can play songs on three instruments.
- Within two weeks of getting my driving permit, I drove to and from Death Valley.
- I hiked a mountain called Angels Landing before I was 18.



**Jody Iorns**

Jody Iorns has spent the last 30+ years in the nonprofit space serving a variety of missions both statewide and locally. Prior to joining the Contra Costa County Bar Association, she worked with organizations such as the Diablo Valley Foundation for the Aging, Epilepsy Foundation of Northern California, Mothers Against Drunk

Driving, Muscular Dystrophy Association, March of Dimes, United Cerebral Palsy, YWCA, and Friday Night Live. She has over 20 years of experience leading non-profit organizations as an Executive Director. She has three adult children and is happy to call the East Bay Area her home for over 44 years.

Two truths and one lie

- I've hiked to the top of Mount Whitney.
- I witnessed an attempted murder.
- I have held a baby sloth.

**Turn to page 23 for the answers.**

*In Memoriam*

The CCCBA honors the following members we lost in the past year

David Flinn, 1938 – 2024

Thomas Joseph Dawson, 1944 – 2024



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Steven S. Abern, Esq.



Hon. Evelio M. Grillo (Ret.)



Hon. Paul Herbert (Ret.)



Hon. Leslie G. Landau (Ret.)



Peter J. Linn, Esq.



Hon. Victoria Wood (Ret.)

For information and scheduling, please contact Joanna Barron at [Joanna@adrservices.com](mailto:Joanna@adrservices.com)

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# 2024 Diversity Awards

*Congratulations to our 2024 Diversity Award recipients who will be recognized on January 31, 2025 at the Installation and Diversity Awards Event.*

- Bhasin Law
- Law Office of Ariel Brownell
- Candelaria LLP
- Law Offices of Natasha S. Chee
- MS Domingo Law Group, P.C.
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- JL Law Group
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# New CCCBA Board Members

WELCOME

## S. Samantha Sepehr



Upon graduating from law school, Samantha Sepehr was awarded a two-year Equal Justice Works Fellowship, sponsored by the CCCBA.

During her fellowship, she served as an advocate and attorney for clients of John F. Kennedy College of Law's Elder Law Clinic, representing victims of elder financial abuse on a pro bono basis by helping them navigate legal challenges while trying to recoup their financial losses. Building on this experience, Samantha transitioned into private practice, expanding her practice area to include trust and probate litigation as well as landlord-tenant matters. She is currently an attorney at Schofield Law Group in Walnut Creek.

member of the Community Violence Reduction Unit.

Kristen was born and raised in Contra Costa County. Her love for Contra Costa rubbed off on her husband, Kurtis Keller, who left private practice for a position with the Contra Costa County Office of the County Counsel.

When Kristen and Kurtis aren't advocating for the residents of Contra Costa County, they are busy with their two lovely children.

## Emily Nashban



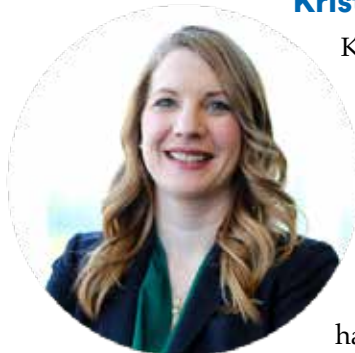
Emily Nashban is partner at the Talbot Law Group, bringing with her over 15 years of professional legal experience. Ms. Nashban specializes in complex Trusts & Probates, Conservatorship and Estate Planning. Before

becoming a vital part of the Talbot team, she contributed her expertise to multiple esteemed San Francisco-based law firms practicing commercial real estate law.

Emily graduated Cum Laude from The University of San Francisco School of Law, and attained her Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her outstanding work in the area of Trust and Estate Law has earned her the prestigious Superlawyers Rising Star Designation on multiple occasions.

Emily is married and has two children and lives in Pleasant Hill, California.

## Kristen Busby



Kristen Busby received her undergraduate degree from UC Davis in 2007 and graduated from UC Davis School of Law in 2012. She has been a Deputy District Attorney in

Contra Costa County since 2013. As a DDA, Kristen has served in various capacities, including Misdemeanors, General Felonies, Probation and Parole, the Domestic Violence Unit, and Juvenile Delinquency. Kristen is currently a

Continued on page 22 ▶

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## New Board Members

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Continued from page 21

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### Indy Colbath



Indy Colbath is partner and shareholder at Bay Area Family Law Center, Inc. in Walnut Creek. She has been an attorney since 2013, and has focused legal career on family law issues, including: divorce, annulment, child custody, child support, spousal support, property division, and domestic violence restraining orders. Recently Indy became a Certified Family Law Specialist, after passing the specialist exam administered by the State Bar of California and meeting the admission requirements for practice experience, education, and endorsement by the legal community.

Indy is active and involved in the Bay Area legal community, currently serving as the Secretary for the CCCBA Family Law Section, where she has been an elected board member since 2022. Indy was previously the President of the CCCBA Barristers Section, and has also served as President of the Eastern Alameda County Bar Association. Indy has also been a member of the Robert G. McGrath American Inn of Court since 2016.

Indy is a Contra Costa County native; she grew up in Pleasant Hill and attended College Park High School. She earned her Bachelor's Degree from the University of California at Davis where she graduated

with honors, majoring in Sociology with emphasis in Law and Society. Indy attended law school at California Western School of Law in San Diego, after being admitted with a full-ride scholarship. Indy graduated in 2013 with her Juris Doctorate, and was admitted to the State Bar of California the same year.

In her free time, Indy enjoys managing her three fantasy football teams, traveling, yoga, and spending time with her husband and their rescue dog, Deebo Samuel.

### Ritzi Lam



Ritzi Lam is a distinguished attorney admitted to the California State Bar in 2011, specializing in Estate Planning, Trust, and Probate Law. As a California State Bar Certified Specialist, she is among approximately 1,000 attorneys in this field, demonstrating her expertise in a competitive landscape of over 196,000 active attorneys in California. Ritzi holds a Master of Laws (LL.M.) in taxation law, enhancing her ability to advise clients on federal tax law and compliance issues related to estate, gift, and income tax matters. With over a decade of practical experience, she adeptly handles all aspects of trust and estates, including drafting complex estate plans and representing various parties in contested matters. Ritzi's litigation practice further includes serving as court-appointed counsel and guardian ad litem, providing her with a comprehensive understanding of the court process. Prior to her private practice, she gained valuable experience as a Judicial Extern and volunteer research attorney in the California court system.

### Rachel Margolis Chapman



Rachel is a skilled criminal defense attorney based in the Bay Area, recognized for her unwavering commitment to her clients' rights. With experience representing over 500 individuals in various criminal cases, including serious offenses such as homicide and domestic violence, she has established a strong reputation in the field. A proud alumna of the University of Southern California, Rachel earned both her undergraduate degree in International Relations/Global Business and her law degree. After passing the bar exam, she dedicated her career to criminal defense, previously working as an associate attorney at Gagen McCoy. Rachel actively participates in the Contra Costa County Bar Association and contributes to several boards and programs within the Bar as well as participating in community programs that support indigent clients. Her writing skills have garnered recognition, with multiple publications in Contra Costa Lawyer.



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## CCCBA Staff: Two Truths and a Lie

Continued from page 15

### Jennifer Comages

- I have been married for 42 years. TRUE
- I am a mother of twins. TRUE
- I'm legally adopted. FALSE

### Barbara Arsedo

- In addition to my job with CCCBA, I am also a registered nurse. FALSE
- I have 5 grandchildren. TRUE
- I was born and raised in San Francisco. TRUE

### Carole Lucido

- I am the oldest of four. TRUE
- I am pretty good at riding a unicycle. FALSE
- As a child, I dreamed of being a mogul. TRUE

### Sarah Marin

- I have never travelled outside of the country. TRUE
- I plan to homeschool my children. FALSE
- I am allergic to peaches. TRUE

### Sara Chakri

- I have eaten grasshoppers, and they are delicious! TRUE
- I've swum with sea turtles. TRUE
- I don't like pizza. FALSE

### Noemi Espinoza

- I'm the oldest of four. FALSE
- I love the beach. TRUE
- I have a total of 8 nieces and nephews. TRUE

### Drew Iorns

- I can play songs on three instruments. TRUE
- Within two weeks of getting my driving permit, I drove to and from Death Valley. TRUE
- I hiked a mountain called Angels Landing before I was 18. FALSE

### Jody Iorns

- I've hiked to the top of Mount Whitney. TRUE
- I witnessed an attempted murder. TRUE
- I have held a baby sloth. FALSE

# 2025 Section Leaders

We are proud to introduce and thank these new and returning section leaders for 2025. CCCBA's sections are truly the life blood of our organization. For up to date details on section leadership, events and programs, visit each section's page on the CCCBA website.

## ADR

Nathan Lawrence Scheg  
Ironhorse Law Group PC  
925.399-6108  
nathan@ironhorselawgroup.com



## BUSINESS LAW

Kent Parr  
925.408.7971  
kentparr@gmail.com

## APPELLATE LAW

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## CRIMINAL LAW

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ashley@tully-weiss.com

Zahra Bocek (Co-Chair)  
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## BANKRUPTCY

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## EMPLOYMENT LAW

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tracy.regli@acunaregli.com



Esther L. Kim (Co-Chair)  
Turner, Huguet, Adams & Farr  
925.228.3433  
ekim@thalaw.com





## FAMILY LAW

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alice@candelarialawoffices.com



## REAL ESTATE

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925.381.8545  
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## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

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## SENIOR LAWYERS

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## JUVENILE

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Law Office of Rhonda Wilson-Rice  
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attyrwr@yahoo.com



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jsuen@youngman.com

## LITIGATION

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Law Office of  
Patricia Ruiz Calzada, Inc.  
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pruizlaw@outlook.com



## WOMEN'S

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rachel@miradorlaw.com

Aaron Doyle (Co-Chair)  
The Doyle Law Firm  
925.231.8140  
aaron@thedoylelawfirm.com

photo not  
available



# Contra Costa County Bar Association

We gratefully acknowledge our  
**2025 SUSTAINING LAW FIRMS**

## **FIRMS WITH 30+ ATTORNEYS:**

Miller Starr Regalia

## **FIRMS WITH 20-29 ATTORNEYS:**

Little Mendelson, P.C.

McNamara, Ambacher, Wheeler, Hirsig & Gray, LLP

## **FIRMS WITH 11-19 ATTORNEYS:**

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Brothers Smith, LLP

Craddick, Candland & Conti

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Greenan Pepper Sallander & Lally LLP

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Barr & Douds Attorneys

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Horner Law Group, P.C.

Law Offices of Joseph H. Wolch

Livingston Law Firm, P.C.

Morrill Law

Patton Sullivan Brodehl LLP

Talbot Law Group, PC

Temmerman Cilley & Kohlman LLP

Whiting, Ross, Abel & Campbell, LLP

# Gavel to Gavel: Celebrating Our New & Retiring Judges

On Thursday November 14, the CCCBA celebrated and honored its judges at the Martinez Event Center.



Retired judge Jill Fannin shared advice with new judges.



New judges listened to Hon. Laurel Brady (Ret.).



Gary Sanders and Judge John Kennedy



Judges Robert Leach, Gina Dashman, Stephanie Clark, Michael Nieto, Melissa O'Connell, Peter Chang and Palvier Shoker



Judges Jill Fannin (Ret.) and Gina Dashman



Judges Palvier Shoker and Christopher Bowen with Qiana Washington and Commissioner Jill Lifter.



Judges Stephanie Clarke and Laurel Brady (Ret.)



Heidi Coad Hermelin and David Hermelin with Hon. Russell Hom (Ret.)



# The Benefits of Membership



All of the businesses featured here offer discounts to CCCBA members that would not otherwise be available. Simply identify yourself as a current CCCBA member to the participating business at the time of your transaction. Having trouble? Contact CCCBA Communications Director Carole Lucido at [clucido@cccba.org](mailto:clucido@cccba.org).

## Airport Parking

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**Discount:** Free two-year membership in PARK SFO Club (normally \$100.00 a year), personalized PARK SFO membership card, free upgrade from standard parking to valet parking. For more information visit [parksfo.com](http://parksfo.com).

## Banking

**Provident Credit Union**  


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303 Twin Dolphin Drive  
Redwood Shores, CA 94065  
Phone: (650) 801-7141  
Email: [mherrera@providentcu.org](mailto:mherrera@providentcu.org)  
Web: [www.providentcu.org](http://www.providentcu.org)

**Discount:** CCCBA members will have access to an exclusive \$300 new

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## Computer & Information Technology Consulting

**Pacific Computer Consultants, Inc.**  
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**Discount:** CCCBA members receive a 15% discount off of published prices.

## Filing Services



### Bay Area File

- Personalized service on location at the Contra Costa and Alameda Superior Courts
- Advanced technology for the upcoming eFiling system
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- Long lasting relationships with court clerks and supervisors

Paul Thornton  
Email: [bayareafile@gmail.com](mailto:bayareafile@gmail.com)  
Telephone: (804) 402-3406  
Web: [www.bayareafile.com](http://www.bayareafile.com)

**Discount:** CCCBA members who sign up for an account online at [www.bayareafile.com](http://www.bayareafile.com) will receive one free standard service of process within Contra Costa County.

## InfoTrack

InfoTrack integrates with popular legal software to streamline eFiling, process serving, eSignatures, and more. By automatically syncing client data, case documents, and billing information, InfoTrack helps law firms improve the litigation workflow.

Lindsey Dean  
lindsey.dean@infotrack.com  
(415) 475-6264  
www.infotrack.com/associations/  
contra-costa-county-bar-association/

**Discount:** CCCBA members receive 10% off InfoTrack electronic court filing, physical court filing, service of process, and electronic service orders.

## Insurance - Professional (E&O), General Liability, Property & Workers Compensation



### Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA)

Professional Liability – Protect Yourself and Your Career.

Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) and the CCCBA are working together to provide members with direct access to this outstanding Lawyers Professional Liability Program, sponsored by the State Bar of California. You benefit from the State Bar's buying power and oversight committee.

Please note: Mercer's Association business was acquired by Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA). As part of this transition, you may see both the Mercer and AMBA names/logos.

Easy Short-Form Application  
Competitive Rates  
Free On-Line MCLE  
Optional Cyber Liability Coverage

It's fast and easy to get a quote. Just complete and return the application and questionnaire and return to AMBA via email or fax.

Josh Cipri, Product Manager  
Phone: (309) 264-2074  
josh.cipri@amba.info  
www.mybarbenefits.com/

### RJW Professional Insurance Services

RJW Professional Insurance Services acts as an broker on your behalf connecting with insurance companies that write Malpractice Insurance for Professional Firms. We are appointed with most, if not all carriers rated "A" or better by Am.M. Best. We are expanding this niche to include accounting firms and expanding the insurance products to include business owners (property and general liability) and workers compensation.

Jack Witherspoon, President  
(510) 708-9182  
jackw@rjwproinsurance.com  
www.rjwproinsurance.com

## Law Firm Support & Operations

### Abogados NOW

Abogados NOW is the nation's leader in bilingual marketing for attorneys. We provide premium bilingual lead generation strategies for attorneys nationwide.

Hugo E. Gomez  
www.abogadosnow.com  
(844) LGL-MKTG  
Email: hugo@abogadosnow.com

**Discount:** When you call, mention that you are a member of the CCCBA and have 100% of the startup fees waived when you join our program.



### DLC Consulting Services, LLC

www.dlccs.com  
(925) 676-6277

DLC Consulting Services is your on-demand COO for solo and small law firms. If you are looking for an experienced business manager to reduce the time and stress of managing your business, we are here to help you with:

- Opening a new firm
- Conducting an operational review and putting in place processes to improve efficiencies
- Accounting, billing, human resources and payroll functions
- Strategic planning and systems management to accommodate growth
- Non-biased reviews of software
- Installation, implementation and training of NetDocuments\*

**Discount:** CCCBA members receive a 25% discount on a commitment of five hours of time or 10% discount on a NetDocuments implementation.

\*NetDocuments is a highly secure cloud-based document and email management software.

## Law Practice Management & Coaching

### Lawyer Success Network

Lawyer Success Network has several options available for lawyers.

Jen Lee

(925) 586-6738

jen@jenleelaw.com

www.lawyersuccessnetwork.com

**Discount:** Use discount code CCCBA\_500 to save \$500 or 25% on Building a Bankruptcy Practice from Start to Finish.

## Law Firm Practice Management Software

### Caseroads

Caseroads is the only all-in-one, feature rich, cloud-based legal and ADR practice management software. It is designed to support the needs of Attorneys, Mediators, and Arbitrators

www.Caseroads.com

info@caseroads.com

**Discount:** Contra Costa County Bar Association members are eligible to receive a 20% discount off Caseroads' unique single tier pricing model. With Caseroads you get it all features for one low discounted price. Go to Caseroads.com; select partners; choose the CCCBA logo and use the code: CCCBA21

## Legal Research



### vLex Fastcase

**Discover how vLex can enhance your research.**

Fastcase, the legal research platform available to you as a member benefit, has been upgraded to vLex Fastcase, a new legal intelligence and research platform.

vLex Fastcase includes everything you have access to now, plus unique features to enhance your productivity and provide you with greater insights into legal matters.

From an award-winning, AI-powered research assistant, to connecting your in-house knowledge with the world's largest collection of legal information on a single service.

**Discount:** vLex Fastcase is FREE for CCCBA members, a value of over \$1300 per year. Activate your vLex Fastcase membership at [www.cccba.org/fastcase](http://www.cccba.org/fastcase)

### Casetext

Smarter, Faster Legal Research and Brief Drafting

Aron Harrity, Casetext, Inc.

548 Market St., PMB 52855

San Francisco, CA 94104

(833) 263-3827

aron@casetext.com

**Discount:** CCCBA members receive an ongoing 25% discount on Casetext. Try it free for 14-days.

## Legal Technology Solution Providers



### Clio

Clio's industry-leading, cloud-based legal practice management, client intake + legal CRM software streamlines law firm operations, improves productivity, and enables legal professionals to increase their revenues from one central location. With powerful tools for client intake, case management, document management, time tracking, invoicing, and online payments, Clio simplifies firm management so you can spend more time doing what you do best—practicing law.

Approved by more than 66 bar associations and legal societies, Clio provides industry-leading security, 24/7 customer support, and 200+ integrations with legal professionals' favorite apps and platforms, including Fastcase, Dropbox, Quickbooks, and Google Apps.

[www.clio.com/ccbar](http://www.clio.com/ccbar)

**Discount:** Contra Costa County Bar Association members are eligible to receive a 10% discount on Clio products that will not expire, as long as you continue to be in good standing with both Clio and the CCCBA.



### LawPay

Approved by more than 110 state, local, and specialty bars, LawPay is proud to be the preferred payment partner of more than 45,000 law firms. Designed specifically for the legal industry, LawPay provides attorneys with a simple, secure way to accept credit card and eCheck payments in their practice. LawPay understands the unique compliance and financial requirements placed on attorneys, which is why their solution was developed specifically to correctly separate earned and unearned fees, giving you peace of mind that your transactions are always handled correctly.

**Discount:** CCCBA members pay no monthly fee for their first three months.

866-730-4140  
lawpay.com/ccba.

3700 North Capital of Texas  
Highway, Suite 300  
Austin, Texas 78746  
Direct Line to Sales: (866) 730-4140  
Email: experts@lawpay.com  
Web: www.lawpay.com/ccba

## Marketing & Promotions

### AdMagic

Advertising Magic/ AdMagix  
Marketing  
Rosalind Robe' Boukis  
1966 Tice Valley Blvd., #131  
Walnut Creek, CA 94595  
(925) 939-1111  
rosalind@advertisingmagic.com  
www.advertisingmagic.com

**Discount:** Free screen or setup charge on all new orders (a \$50 value) or free 1/2-hour marketing consultation.

### Company Folders, Inc.

Vladimir Gendelman  
22 W. Huron St., #203  
Pontiac, MI 48342  
(248) 738-7600  
support@companyfolders.com  
www.companyfolders.com

**Discount:** CCCBA members receive 10% off the first order, and free shipping within the continental U.S. Use the code "CCCBA" when requesting a quote.

## Office and Virtual Office Solutions

### Abby Connect

Abby Connect provides top-rated, 24/7 receptionist services to law firms.  
(877) 303-5757  
sales@abby.com  
abby.com

**Discount:** CCCBA members receive 7% monthly recurring discount after 14 day free trial.

### Smith.ai

Smith.ai is a superior 24/7 virtual receptionist service for law practices of all sizes, from solo attorneys to large firms.

650-727-6484  
hello@smith.ai  
<https://smith.ai/member-benefits/cccba>

**Discount:** Contra Costa County Bar Association members get \$100 off their first month of calls and chats with code CCCBA100, 5% off bundled services, and 10% off annual plans paid upfront.

### Intelligent Office

Intelligent Office is a key player in the virtual office movement, IO offers tailored, turnkey solutions for businesses looking to customize elements of traditional office spaces and staffing.

Sierra van der Kamp  
2950 Buskirk Ave., Suite 300  
Walnut Creek, CA 94597  
(925) 407-4700  
svanderkamp@Intelligentoffice.com  
www.IntelligentOffice.com

**Discount:** Sign up for a one year agreement for any Intelligent Office business service and get the first 4 months at 50% off. This offer applies to new members at Intelligent Office who are also members of the Contra Costa County Bar Association on a one year member agreement. This offer discounts the base monthly fee for business services and excludes dedicated office leases.

## Therapy

### BetterHelp

Convenient, affordable, private online therapy for members. Talk with a licensed, professional therapist online anytime, anywhere.

**Discount:** CCCBA members are eligible for online therapy free of charge for one month and a 15% discount off the cost after that.

## Travel – Car Rental

### Hertz

Please visit Hertz.com for a complete vehicle class guide.

(800) 654-3131  
www.hertz.com

**Discount:** CCCBA members receive up to 10% off rental car rates. Use Corporate Discount Program ID# 2133824 when making your reservations. You can use this number when reserving online, over the phone, through a travel agent, or walk-up reservations.

# Barristers Present: Harvest Gathering

On Saturday November 16, the Barristers Section invited the CCCBA to a FREE event at the Lafayette Reservoir. The group shared a moment of gratitude and community as the holiday season approached. They served a delicious barbecue lunch (by Hazy BBQ) and fun activities were planned for all ages - including a morning 5k run/walk, lawn games, and a scavenger hunt! Be sure not to miss it next year!



Jen Navalle and Ariana Flynn, Co-Presidents of the Barristers Section.





# CALENDAR

## UPCOMING EVENTS | OVERVIEW

January 31 | CCCBA

### Annual Installation and Awards Luncheon

(Hybrid)

11:30 am – 1:30 pm | Contra Costa Country Club, 801 Golf Club Rd., Pleasant Hill | Details TBA

For more information, see below.

February 6 | CCCBA DEI Committee

### 8th Annual Lunar New Year Celebration Dinner

(In Person)

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm | Yaedam Korean BBQ, 1428 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill | \$50/person

**Sponsors:** Jim W. Yu | MS Domingo Law Group | Ferber Law | Littler | Milanfar Law Firm PC | Miller Starr Regalia | Womble Bond Dickinson | Livingston Law Firm  
For more information, see page 11.

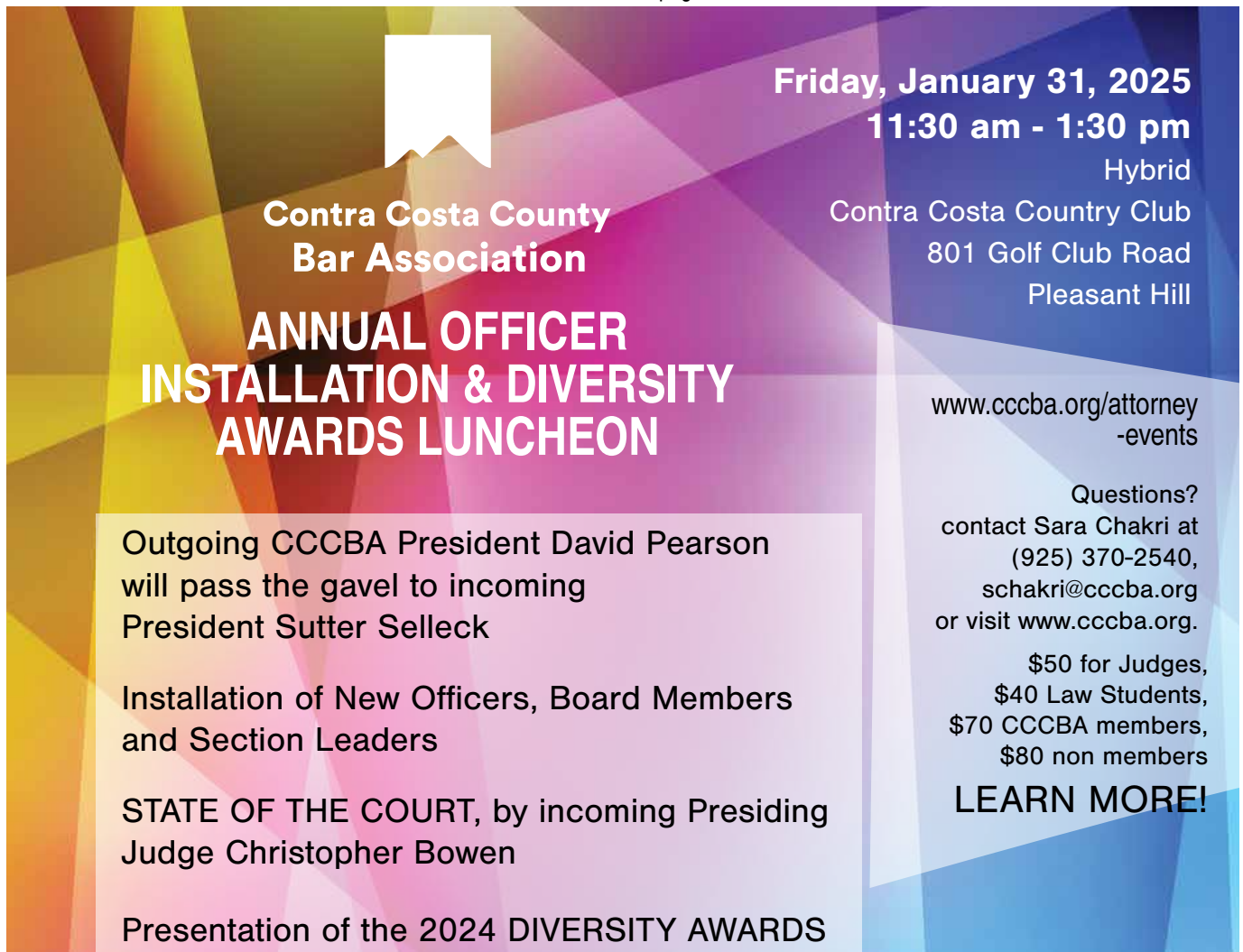
February 28 | Barristers

### Bridging the Gap 2025

(In Person)

For new attorneys and new-to-the-county attorneys.

9:30 am - 4:30 pm | CC County DA's Office Community Room, 900 Ward St., (Entrance on Court St) Martinez | 4 hours General MCLE credit | Free for new admittee attorneys, \$10 Barristers and Law Students, \$25 CCCBA members, \$45 non members



**Friday, January 31, 2025**  
**11:30 am - 1:30 pm**  
Hybrid  
Contra Costa Country Club  
801 Golf Club Road  
Pleasant Hill

**Contra Costa County Bar Association**

**ANNUAL OFFICER INSTALLATION & DIVERSITY AWARDS LUNCHEON**

Outgoing CCCBA President David Pearson will pass the gavel to incoming President Sutter Selleck

Installation of New Officers, Board Members and Section Leaders

STATE OF THE COURT, by incoming Presiding Judge Christopher Bowen

Presentation of the 2024 DIVERSITY AWARDS

[www.cccba.org/attorney-events](http://www.cccba.org/attorney-events)

Questions? contact Sara Chakri at (925) 370-2540, [schakri@cccba.org](mailto:schakri@cccba.org) or visit [www.cccba.org](http://www.cccba.org).

\$50 for Judges,  
\$40 Law Students,  
\$70 CCCBA members,  
\$80 non members

**LEARN MORE!**

# CLASSIFIEDS

**LOOKING FOR A FIFTH ATTORNEY** to fill a vacancy in our suite in a top drawer, two-story building at 1211 Newell, Walnut Creek, near Broadway Plaza. The available space is a corner “partner” office, 17’8” x 12’10”, with a Mt. Diablo view, and includes a secretarial cubicle. The office has access to our conference room, and there is security to the suite. We provide VOIP phones and high speed internet as a part of the rent. If interested in joining us, please email Dean Christopherson at dac@calaw.com.

## ADVERTISING SPACE AVAILABLE

Did you know that you can run classified ads in Contra Costa Lawyer and also on the CCCBA website? Classified ads run on the CCCBA website for 30 days. Members pay just \$85 per month for online classified ads that can include photos or graphics. For information, please contact Carole Lucido, CCCBA Communications Director at (925) 370-2542 or [clucido@cccba.org](mailto:clucido@cccba.org).

## Advertising & Sponsorship Opportunities

### Contra Costa Lawyer - Print and Online



The Contra Costa Lawyer is the official publication of the Contra Costa County Bar Association. It is published every other month for an audience of more than 1,500 attorneys, judges and court officials, law libraries and public officials involved with the administration of justice in Contra Costa County and has a readership of approximately 4,500 online.

Both the print and online editions of Contra Costa Lawyer have won awards of excellence from the National Association of Bar Executives.

Cost effective sponsorship and advertising opportunities are available.

View and download the complete sponsorship and advertising kit at [www.cccba.org/flyer/2025/cccba-adkit-2025.pdf](http://www.cccba.org/flyer/2025/cccba-adkit-2025.pdf)

Contact CCCBA Communications Director Carole Lucido if you have questions on advertising, [clucido@cccba.org](mailto:clucido@cccba.org) or (925) 370-2542 or contact Development and Programs Manager, Sarah Marin for questions on sponsorship, [smarin@cccba.org](mailto:smarin@cccba.org) or (925) 849-8849 .

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# Superior Court of Contra Costa County

## 2025 JUDICIAL ASSIGNMENTS

### Christopher Bowen

Presiding Judge

### Joni Hiramoto

Assistant Presiding Judge

## MARTINEZ

### Criminal

#### Supervising Judge:

**David Goldstein**

- ◆ Hon. Charles (Ben) Burch
- ◆ Hon. John Kennedy
- ◆ Hon. Joni Hiramoto
- ◆ Hon. Rebecca Hardie
- ◆ Hon. Mary Ann O'Malley
- ◆ Hon. Terri Mockler
- ◆ Hon. Julia Campins (Mental Health/Backup Criminal)
- ◆ Hon. Patricia Scanlon (Arraignments, 995s, Probation/Parole/PRCS/Overflow PX) (through 1/31/25)
- ◆ Hon. Glenn Kim (Felony Arraignments/995s/Probation/Parole/PRCS/Overflow PXs) (effective 2/3/2025)

### Misdemeanor Depts.

- ◆ Hon. Robin Leach
- ◆ Hon. Wade Rhyne
- ◆ Hon. Charles (Steve) Treat
- ◆ Hon. Jesse Hsieh (through 1/31/25)

### Probate

#### Supervising Judge:

**Virginia George**

- ◆ Hon. Barbara Hinton (50%)
- ◆ Hon. Melissa O'Connell (LPS; 50%)

### Civil

#### Supervising Judge:

**Danielle Douglas**

- ◆ Hon. Edward G. Weil (Complex Civil)
- ◆ Hon. Benjamin Reyes
- ◆ Hon. John Devine
- ◆ Hon. Leonard Marquez
- ◆ Hon. Melissa O'Connell (50%)
- ◆ Comm. Yamamoto

### Family Law

#### Supervising Judge:

**Palvir Shoker**

- ◆ Hon. Peter Chang
- ◆ Hon. Gina Dashman
- ◆ Hon. Ayana Young
- ◆ Hon. Kirk Athanasiou
- ◆ Hon. Wendy Coats (DVRO Calendar)
- ◆ Comm. Quam (DCSS)

### Juvenile

#### Supervising Judge:

**Rebecca Hardie**

- ◆ Hon. Barbara Hinton (50%)
- ◆ Hon. Colleen Gleason
- ◆ Hon. Shara Beltramo (50%)
- ◆ Comm. Yamamoto (Tues/Thurs Morning Traffic Calendar)
- ◆ Comm. Verriere (Mon/Wed/Fri Morning Traffic Calendar)

## PITTSBURG

#### Supervising Judge:

**John Cope** (Supervising/Felonies)

- ◆ Hon. Brian Haynes (through 2/19/25)
- ◆ Hon. Glenn Kim (through 1/31/25)
- ◆ Hon. Frank Riebli
- ◆ Hon. Nichelle Holmes
- ◆ Hon. Jesse Hsieh (effective 2/3/25)
- ◆ Comm. Lifter

## RICHMOND

#### Supervising Judge:

**Jennifer Lee** (Supervising/Felonies)

- ◆ Hon. Stephanie Clarke
- ◆ Hon. Michael Nieto
- ◆ Comm. Verriere

 **Contra Costa County  
Bar Association**

2300 Clayton Road, Suite 520  
Concord, CA 94520  
www.cccbba.org

**CASPER MEADOWS  
SCHWARTZ & COOK**  
BAY AREA INJURY ATTORNEYS



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