



Superior Court of California County of Orange **News Release**

Public Information Office
Contact: Kostas Kalaitzidis (657) 622-7097
PIO@occourts.org

September 20, 2024

Judges Reelect Hon. Maria D. Hernandez as Presiding Judge and elect Hon. Sheila F. Hanson as Assistant Presiding Judge

Santa Ana, Calif. – Hon. Maria D. Hernandez was reelected Presiding Judge, and Hon. Sheila F. Hanson was elected Assistant Presiding Judge in an uncontested election for the two top posts of the Superior Court of California, County of Orange.

Judge Hernandez has been elected by the bench to serve as the Presiding Judge for a term of one additional year commencing January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. Judge Hanson has been elected by the bench to serve as the Assistant Presiding Judge for a two-year term commencing January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2026.

Superior Court of California, County of Orange serves the third most populated county in the State and the sixth largest county nationwide.



Judge Hernandez has served as Presiding Judge since January 2023 and Assistant Presiding Judge from 2021 to 2023. She was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as a judge of the Orange County Superior Court in 2009. She served as a senior deputy public defender in County of Orange, until she was appointed to the bench as a Commissioner in 2006. Judge Hernandez received her Bachelor's Degree from University of California, Irvine in 1986, and her law degree from Western State University-Fullerton in 1991.

Since 2006, Judge Hernandez has served on the Criminal Felony Trial Panel, West Justice Panel, and the Juvenile Justice and Dependency Panels. Judge Hernandez spent nine years with the juvenile court serving as the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court from 2014-18, where she created and presided over the dedicated court addressing commercially sexually exploited children (GRACE-Generating Resources to Abolish Child Exploitation) and co-chaired the Orange County Committee relating to Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC).

Judge Hernandez also created and presided over an innovative collaborative court dedicated to boys in the child welfare system in 2010, which continues to meet the needs of highest risk system-involved youth and launched a Young Adult Court (YAC), which addresses the special needs of emerging adults charged with felonies in the criminal justice system. Judge Hernandez most recently served as the chair of the State Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee and currently serves as voting member of the Judicial Council. In addition, since 2011, she has served as adjunct Professor at Chapman Law School and Western State College of Law.



Judge Hanson was elected to the Orange County Superior Court on November 7, 2006. While waiting to take office in January 2007, Judge Hanson was appointed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger enabling her to assume her duties on December 13, 2006.

She currently presides over a long cause criminal jury trial calendar having served in her current role on the Felony Trial Panel since 2018. She served as Supervising Judge of the Felony Panel from 2016 to 2018 and as Supervising Judge of the North Justice Center from January 2009 to February 2012.

Judge Hanson serves as Chair of the Technology Committee and leads the court's technology innovation efforts. She also serves on the Executive and Finance committees and has served on many other court committees. In addition, Judge Hanson serves as the Chair of the Information Technology Advisory Committee to the California Judicial Council. She assumed that role in 2016. She also previously served on the Executive Committee of the California Judges Association 2013-2016.

Prior to joining the court, Judge Hanson served as an Orange County Deputy District Attorney for nearly 18 years.

Judge Hanson received her law degree from Western State University College of Law-Fullerton in 1989.

In addition, Judge Hanson previously served as adjunct Professor at Western State University College of Law. She is the recipient of the Inaugural Award for Excellence in Leadership by the North Orange County Bar Association in December 2011 and was inducted into the Western State University College of Law Hall of Fame on May 15, 2010.

#