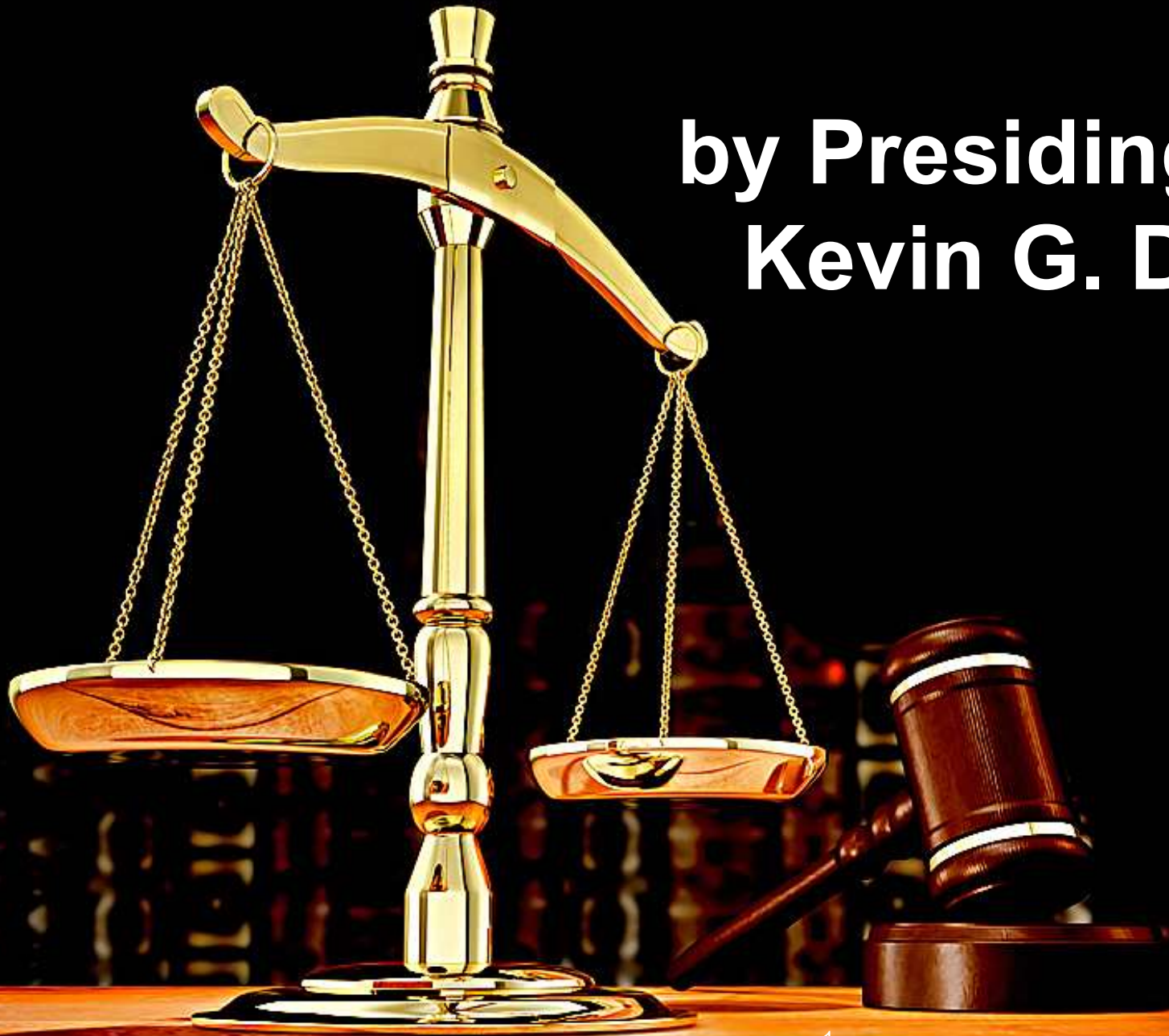


# State of the Superior Court

by Presiding Judge  
Kevin G. DeNoce





# Status of Bench Composition

- **We have 30 Superior Court Judge seats.**
- **Two Superior Court Judge seats are vacant.**
- **We have 4 Commissioner positions.**
- **One Commissioner position is vacant, and we are currently reviewing applicants.**



# Status of Bench Composition

- **14 of our courtrooms are devoted to Criminal cases.**
- **6 courts are devoted to Civil cases.**
- **5 courts are devoted to Family Law.**
- **2 courts are devoted to Juvenile/Dependency cases.**
- **1 court for Probate cases.**

**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF VENTURA**

**Effective January 1, 2024**

<b>CIVIL</b>	
20	Judge Matthew P. Guasco, Assistant Presiding Judge (Chambers 22)
21	Judge Jeffrey G. Bennett (Unlawful Detainers)
22	Judge Kevin G. DeNoce, Presiding Judge (MSCs) (Chambers 20)
40	Judge Mark S. Borrell – (CEQA backup)
41	Judge Ronda J. McKaig – CEQA and Laura’s Law
42	Judge Henry J. Walsh
43	Judge Benjamin F. Coats, Supervising Judge Civil Division
J6	Judge Roger L. Lund – Probate
<b>FAMILY LAW</b>	
31	Judge Rocky Baio
32	Judge Michael S. Lief
33	Judge Charmaine H. Buehner
34	Commissioner Amy E. Van Sickle
35	Judge Michele M. Castillo
36	Judge JoAnn Johnson, Supervising Judge Family Law Division
<b>JUVENILE</b>	
J1	Judge Gilbert A. Romero- Dependency, Supervising Judge Juvenile Division
J3	Judge F. Dino Inumerable
J4	Vacant
<b>CRIMINAL</b>	
10	Commissioner Dusty Kawai
11	Judge David M. Hirsch
12	Commissioner Dusty Kawai
13	Judge Kristi J. Peariso (Mental Health Court)
14	Judge, Ryan J. Wright Supervising Judge Criminal Division
23	Judge Nancy L. Ayers
24	Judge Paul W. Feldman
25	Judge Catherine M. Voelker
26	Judge Marine Dermadzhyan
27	Judge Paul W. Baelly
37	Judge Patricia M. Murphy
44	Vacant
45	Judge Maureen M. Houska
46	Judge Anthony J. Sabo
47	Judge David R. Worley
48	Judge Derek D. Malan
J5/S1	Commissioner Julia Snyder
<b>APPELLATE DEPARTMENT</b>	
	Judge Ronda J. McKaig, Presiding Appellate Judge
	Judge Charmaine H. Buehner
	Judge Derek D. Malan
	Judge Catherine M. Voelker





# Court Leadership

- **Presiding Judge Kevin G. DeNoce.**
- **Assistant Presiding Judge Guasco.**
- **Criminal Supervisor Judge Wright.**
- **Civil Supervisor Judge Coats.**
- **Family Law Supervisor Judge Johnson.**
- **Juvenile Supervisor Judge Romero.**
- **CEO Brenda McCormick.**



# Changes on our Court

- **In 2023, we added three new members to our bench: Judges Dermadzhyan and Feldman & Commissioner Van Sickle.**
- **We also had departures from our bench in 2023. Judges Young and Covvarubias retired from our bench and Judge - now Justice Cody - was appointed to the Court of Appeal.**
- **Judge Sabo received the Public Safety award from the Knights of Columbus and Judges Johnson and Lund were named Judges of the year by VCTLA for 2021, and 2022 respectively.**



# Case Volume Status

- **There are about 2,000 judicial officers in California which process over 4 million cases statewide.**
- **In comparison, the federal judicial system has only about 870 judges.**
- **Ventura County Judges & Commissioners have one of the highest case to bench officer ratios in the state in that there are over 3,000 filed case per bench officer.**



# Judicial Appointments

- **Two Superior Court seats are vacant.**
- **I regularly speak with the Governor's Appointment Secretary, Luis Cespedes and provide info about applicants.**
- **We anticipate a number of Judges retiring in 2024 creating additional vacancies.**
- **Encourage qualified candidates to apply.**
- **Will be having an outreach Zoom session with Mr. Cespedes on 2/21 at noon.**





## PANEL



**Luis Cespedes**  
Judicial Appointment Secretary  
Office of Governor Gavin Newsom



**Hon. Kevin G. DeNoce**  
Presiding Judge, Ventura Superior Court



**Hon. Michele M. Castillo**  
Moderator  
Judge, Ventura Superior Court



**Hon. Marine Dermadzyhan**  
Judge, Ventura Superior Court

# The Bench is calling...

*Will YOU heed to the call?*

The Tri-Counties Judicial Mentor Program of Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo County Superior Courts  
Invite You to Attend:

*“The Bench is Calling...”*

WILL YOU HEED TO THE CALL?

JUDICIAL MENTOR PROGRAM VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

The *Tri-Counties Judicial Mentorship Program* is a collaboration between the Executive & Judicial Branches of the state of California, with the goal of recruiting and developing a highly qualified judicial applicant pool that reflects California’s rich diversity. The purpose of this discussion is intended to bring awareness of the judicial needs in Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties while providing support to prospective candidates during the process.

If self-doubt has held you back from achieving your professional goals, consider that high-achieving jurists once grappled with the same hesitance earlier in their legal careers. If you aspire to serve in California’s judiciary, a judicial mentor is available to you to guide you through the application process so you can “just press SEND!” when submitting your application.

All interested in applying for appointment to the bench, or underway in the application process, please join us for a **free** hybrid event and hear from a diverse panel of judges and hear their pathways to the bench.

12:15 - 1:15 P.M.

VIA ZOOM

WEDNESDAY, 2/21/24


just press **SEND**

REGISTER NOW

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

EMAIL: [JUDICIALMENTORS@VENTURA.COURTS.CA.GOV](mailto:JUDICIALMENTORS@VENTURA.COURTS.CA.GOV)





# eCourt system for Civil & Probate

- **In April, the Court Launched our eCourt electronic case management system for Civil and Probate cases.**
- **This new system brought a sea-change in our business practices by going from paper to electronic case files.**
- **The feedback is that it easier to navigate than V3 and that customers like that they can view and print out public documents on-line.**
- **eCourt has decreased the number of customers that must come to the courthouse to obtain a conformed copy.**
- **This month we are starting the next phase of developing and deploying eFiling, which will replace eDelivery and provide us with even more electronic capabilities.**
- **We anticipate that eFiling will be deployed for Civil, Probate and Civil Appeals this year. Thereafter, we will begin the development of eCourt for Family Law case types.**



# Role of the Presiding Judge

- **The PJ determines judicial assignments and who the Supervising Judges are for each division:  
Criminal: J. Wright; Civil: J. Coats; FL: J. Johnson;  
Juvenile: J. Romero.**
- **Acts as the spokesperson for the Court, issues press releases, etc;**
- **Apportions the business of the court, including assigning cases;**
- **Authorizes expenditures from the court's budget;**
- **Calls meetings of the Judges.**



# Jury Trial Backlog?

- **We have no jury trial backlog in Civil.**
- **We recently started bring in new jurors in the morning and afternoon which has helped with juror moral and jury availability for trials.**
- **Although Criminal does not have a juror shortage problem it does occasionally have a last day issues.**





# Mandatory Settlement Conferences

- **I handle all the MSCs which are primarily done via Zoom.**
- **We try to schedule MSCs 60 – 90 days before trial – after discovery completed but before trial investment. Will do MSCs earlier upon request.**
- **5 days prior to an MSC, the parties are required to submit their MSC brief and MSC form which explains the rules applicable to the Zoom MSC including confidentiality. Make sure your clients sign the form agreeing to the rules and the confidentiality of the proceeding.**
- **If I cannot broker a settlement, I will often make a recommended settlement in writing by way of email.**





# Mandatory Settlement Conferences

(Best practices for counsel.)

- **Make sure you submit your MSC brief at least 5 days prior to the MSC along with the Zoom MSC rules signed by yourself and client.**
- **If the case is not ripe for settlement, do not assume that you are stuck with that date and cannot continue it. I want to conduct an MSC when it is ripe for settlement.**
- **Talk with your clients before the MSC as to potential new offers/demands and what their settlement range is. I conduct MSCs where it is clear that counsel has not had sufficient discussions with their client about what offer or demand they wish to make which results in me having to pause the MSC so they can speak with their client.**



# Mandatory Settlement Conferences

(Best practices for counsel, continued.)

- **Make sure that in advance of the MSC you think about all the potential settlement terms you want such as a Civil Code section 1542 waiver, each side will bear their own attorney fees and costs, Plaintiff(s) to be responsible for the payment of any outstanding medical bills and liens, interest accrual for late payment, etc.**
- **If the parties cannot agree on a settlement, consider inviting me to make a recommendation. Make sure you give me enough factual detail in your MSC brief and comments so that I can make an informed recommended settlement.**



# Mandatory Settlement Conferences (Court recommended settlements.)

- **If an agreed upon settlement cannot be reached, I inquire if the parties want me to make a recommended settlement which I do by email after drafting a proposal with CCP section 664.6 language.**
- **When I make a suggested settlement, I email it to each party separately and typically give them a week to respond. Each side responds only to the court. That way, the parties do not know how the other side responded unless each side accepts my recommended settlement.**
- **Once a settlement has been reached, to make it CCP section 664.6 enforceable, we can go back on the record via Zoom to memorialize it or the parties can draft a written agreement. I created a fill in the blank settlement form which is on the court's web page.**



# Criminal Update

- **We are down two bench officers in criminal and are hoping to get a new appointed judge soon that I can assign to the Criminal Dept.**
- **We will be selecting a new Commissioner soon which I will assign to Criminal.**
- **Our Court Reporter shortage is still impacting Criminal and to a lesser degree, Family Law & Civil.**
- **A fully staffed Court Reporter Dept. consists of 28 reporters. At present, the Court has only 14 full time reporters and three (3) part time reporters currently working.**
- **Criminal is also dealing with a high number of re-sentencings created by recent legislation.**



**Contact me for any questions at:**

**[Kevin.DeNoce@ventura.courts.ca.gov](mailto:Kevin.DeNoce@ventura.courts.ca.gov)**

**My web page where you can get info about  
myself, and the court is:**

**[www.DeNoce.com](http://www.DeNoce.com)**



**Class is adjourned!**

