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JUNE - TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FOUR



JUDGE JULIA SNYDER

By Co-written by Jessica Ball, Makenzie Woo, Bella Tomasetta, and Elianna Gomez.

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JOSHUA S. HOPSTONE

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Joshua S. Hopstone

"I am the president of the Ventura County Bar Association (VCBA), a midsize suburban county in southern California. Write me an article for the VCBA monthly newsletter, around 1,500 words more or less, about how Artificial Intelligence may impact the practice of law in a community like ours. Address things like privacy and confidentiality, regulation and tax, intellectual property, and blockchain. Conclude that AI will likely enhance, but not replace, the day to day work of practicing attorneys. Thanks a bunch!"

Artificial Intelligence and the Practice of Law in Ventura County: Navigating the Future

As the President of the Ventura County Bar Association (VCBA), it is my pleasure to share insights on a topic that is transforming the landscape of our profession: Artificial Intelligence (AI). While AI promises to revolutionize various aspects of the legal field, it is crucial to understand how it will impact the practice of law in our community. From privacy and confidentiality to regulation and tax, intellectual property, and blockchain, AI presents both opportunities and challenges. Ultimately, while AI will enhance our practice, it will not replace the essential role of attorneys.

Privacy and Confidentiality.

One of the foremost concerns regarding AI in the legal profession is the protection of privacy and confidentiality. Legal practitioners are bound by stringent ethical obligations to safeguard client information. The integration of AI systems, which often require access to vast amounts of data, raises questions about maintaining these standards.

AI tools can significantly enhance data management, from document review to e-discovery, by quickly analyzing large datasets. However, this efficiency comes with the need to ensure that client data is secure. Legal professionals must be vigilant in choosing AI providers who comply with privacy laws and have robust security measures in place.

Moreover, AI's ability to predict case outcomes and provide legal research can be invaluable. However, attorneys must remain cautious about the sources of data

these AI systems use. Ensuring that AI tools are transparent about their data sources and methodologies is crucial to maintaining the integrity of legal advice and protecting client confidentiality.

Regulation and Tax.

The advent of AI also brings forth regulatory and tax implications. As AI systems become more prevalent, they will likely face increased scrutiny and regulation. Attorneys in Ventura County must stay abreast of evolving laws governing AI technology, both to advise clients and to ensure their practices comply with new regulations.

AI can assist in navigating the complex landscape of tax law by automating routine tasks such as tax preparation and compliance checks. However, as with any technology, the use of AI in tax law must be approached with caution. Ensuring that AI systems are accurate and up-to-date with the latest tax regulations is essential to avoid costly errors.

Additionally, the potential for AI to disrupt traditional employment raises questions about tax implications for businesses. As companies increasingly integrate AI into their operations, attorneys must be prepared to address issues related to employment taxes and the classification of AI systems as taxable entities.

Intellectual Property.

AI's role in creating and managing intellectual property (IP) is another area ripe for exploration. AI can streamline the process of patent searches, trademark registrations, and copyright filings, making it easier for attorneys to manage IP portfolios. However, the use of AI in IP law also raises novel questions about ownership and authorship.

For instance, when an AI system generates a piece of artwork or an invention, who holds the copyright or patent? Current IP laws are not fully equipped to address these scenarios, necessitating ongoing

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legal evolution. Attorneys in Ventura County must be prepared to navigate these uncharted waters, advocating for policies that protect creators' rights while fostering innovation.

Moreover, the use of AI in IP litigation can provide significant advantages, such as predicting case outcomes and identifying potential infringements. However, attorneys must ensure that these AI tools are used ethically and do not undermine the fairness of the legal process.

Blockchain and Smart Contracts.

Blockchain technology, often associated with cryptocurrencies, has significant implications for the legal profession, particularly when combined with AI. One of the most promising applications is the use of smart contracts, which are self-executing contracts with the terms directly written into code.

Smart contracts can automate many aspects of contract management, from execution to enforcement, reducing the need for intermediaries and increasing efficiency. However, their use also raises legal and technical challenges. Attorneys must understand the intricacies of blockchain technology to draft, interpret, and enforce smart contracts effectively.

AI can further enhance the utility of blockchain by providing advanced analytics and automation capabilities. For example, AI can help identify potential breaches of contract or predict disputes before they arise. However, the integration of AI and blockchain must be approached with caution to ensure that the technology is reliable and that the legal framework governing its use is robust.

The Future of Legal Practice with AI.

Despite the transformative potential of AI, it is essential to recognize that AI will enhance rather than replace the practice of law. The human element—critical thinking, ethical judgment, and client advocacy—remains irreplaceable. AI can handle routine tasks, analyze data, and even predict outcomes, but it lacks the nuanced understanding and empathy that only human attorneys can provide.

In Ventura County, the adoption of AI will likely streamline many aspects of legal practice, allowing attorneys to focus more

on complex and high-value tasks. For instance, AI can handle initial document reviews, freeing attorneys to concentrate on strategy and client interactions. Similarly, AI-powered legal research tools can provide quick and comprehensive insights, enabling attorneys to craft more informed and effective arguments.

However, the successful integration of AI into legal practice requires ongoing education and adaptation. Attorneys must be proactive in learning about new technologies and understanding their implications. The VCBA can play a crucial role in facilitating this education, offering resources and training to help members stay current with technological advancements.

Furthermore, ethical considerations must remain at the forefront. The use of AI in legal practice must be guided by principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability. Attorneys must ensure that AI tools are used responsibly and do not exacerbate existing biases or inequalities in the legal system.

Conclusion.

Artificial Intelligence holds immense potential to enhance the practice of law in Ventura County. From improving efficiency in data management and legal research to navigating complex regulatory and tax landscapes, AI can be a valuable tool for attorneys. However, the integration of AI must be approached with caution, ensuring that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, and ethical standards are upheld.

While AI will undoubtedly transform many aspects of legal practice, it will not replace the essential role of attorneys.

The human elements of critical thinking, ethical judgment, and client advocacy remain irreplaceable. By embracing AI as a tool to enhance their practice, attorneys in Ventura County can provide more effective and efficient services while maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.

As we navigate this new frontier, the VCBA stands ready to support its members, providing the resources and education needed to harness the power of AI responsibly. Together, we can ensure that the practice of law in Ventura County continues to thrive in the age of AI, delivering justice and upholding the rule of law in our community.



"Now give me an image of a funny robot face."

The **JSH-GPT-4.0** is an AI-powered robot acquired by local law firm Ferguson Case Orr Paterson LLP to replace former litigation partner Joshua S. Hopstone, after realizing he had absolutely nothing to offer society that a machine couldn't spit out in literal seconds. Prior to being canned, Mr. Hopstone could have been reached at (805) 659-6800 or jhopstone@fcoplaw.com.



Joshua S. Hopstone is a partner at Ferguson Case Orr Paterson LLP. His practice focuses on business and real estate litigation, trust/probate litigation, and appeals.

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BARRISTERS' CORNER JULIA SNYDER- JUDGE-ELECT

Co-written by Jessica Ball, Makenzie Woo, Bella Tomasetta, and Elianna Gomez.



Judge-elect Julia Snyder, currently serving as a Ventura County Superior Court Commissioner, was recently elected to fill a 2025 Ventura County Superior Court seat. As law students on the Barristers' Board, we interviewed Snyder about her victory in the recent election.

By way of background, **Judge Henry Walsh** will not run for election this year, leaving his position open. Snyder faced off against **Edward Andrews, Mike Malak, and John McBride** to fill Judge Walsh's seat. She garnered over 50% of votes and will officially be sworn in to the bench on January 6, 2025.

Born in Encino and raised in Thousand Oaks, Snyder knew since eighth grade that she wanted to be a judge. Her passion for law was ignited during lively debates hosted by her English teacher. Snyder light-heartedly jokes about always having something to say during these spontaneous discussions and her pre-teen aspirations to become an attorney. With grit and determination, Snyder's ambitions have become a reality.

Snyder attended Southwestern Law School, interned with the district attorney's office, then passed the California Bar Examination. Snyder raised three children while accomplishing her career and educational goals. For nearly two decades, Snyder served her community as a Deputy District Attorney in the felony crime division. During Snyder's

last few years as a prosecutor, she worked full-time in a trial assignment and obtained a master's degree. Now, she performs the duties of Superior Court Commissioner and teaches as an adjunct professor at the Ventura campus of The Colleges of Law.

Ventura County Superior Court judges unanimously appointed Snyder as Commissioner, recognizing her extensive resume and compelling demeanor. Snyder exemplifies the qualities of a good judge. She commands respect, exuding an assertive yet joyful presence. She is compassionate and understanding yet firm and sensible. According to Snyder, "Demeanor is key... A judge must be open-minded, willing to listen, fair, and calm because there are people who will challenge your judicial temperament." Snyder admires **Judge Patty Murphy** (Ret.), describing her as a deliberative, humble judge she hopes to emulate.

Snyder speaks fondly of all the judges she serves with and their collegiality. Ventura County judges regularly meet for lunch, sharing their daily experiences and courtroom observations. She describes Ventura County as having an amicable, team-like atmosphere behind the bench.

Snyder's advice for new attorneys and law students is invaluable. She reminds us that with hard work and determination, we can achieve our goals. She advises, "In addition to being honest, ethical, and fair, your work ethic is a huge part of your reputation and something that we [judges] talk about often." According to Snyder, civility, professionalism, and a robust work ethic are key components to maintaining an esteemed reputation (and avoiding notoriety) among Ventura County judges. Practicing in a small community can be beneficial if one is diligent and respectful. As aspiring attorneys, we admire Snyder's tenacity, commitment to unbiased adjudication, and applaud her dedication to the Ventura County community. We look forward to seeing Judge Snyder on the bench in 2025.

*This Barrister's Corner article was co-written by Colleges of Law students **Jessica Ball, Makenzie Woo, Bella Tomasetta, and Elianna Gomez.***



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SUPERIOR COURT UPDATES



Judge Worley Retires

Judge David Worley retired on May 20, 2024 from the Superior Court of California, County of Ventura after more than 17 years of dedicated service.

Worley was appointed by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on May 16, 2008, and was administered the oath of office the same day, filling the vacancy created by the retirement of **Judge Thomas Hutchins**. Prior to his judicial appointment, Worley was selected in 2007 as a Court Commissioner by the judges of the Ventura Superior Court and served in that position until his judicial appointment. During his tenure as a judicial officer Worley was assigned to civil, criminal and juvenile matters, and he also served as a Supervising Judge of the Simi Valley Courthouse.

Before he joined the Ventura Superior Court, Worley worked in private practice from 1984 to 2007. From 1981 through 1984, he served as a deputy district attorney for the Ventura County District Attorney's Office.

Notable honors include Worley receiving the Knights of Columbus Council #750 Public Safety Award (2019) in recognition of his public safety contributions to the community.

Worley graduated with honors from California State College at Bakersfield. He also attended the United States Military Academy at West Point. He earned his Juris Doctorate degree from Loyola University of Los Angeles.



Judge Hernandez takes the Bench

Judge Ethel R. Hernandez took the bench on Monday, May 13, 2024, as Ventura County's newest Superior Court Judge. The **Honorable Marine Dermadzhyan** administered Hernandez's judicial oath of office. Hernandez was appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom on May 3, 2024. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of **Judge Bruce A. Young** in December 2023.

Prior to her appointment, Hernandez was a senior deputy district attorney for the Ventura County District Attorney's Office. Her most recent assignment was prosecuting narcotics sales cases, which involved close collaboration with law enforcement agencies in complex investigations. Before joining the Ventura DA's Office, Hernandez served as a deputy district attorney pro tem for the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office where she prosecuted misdemeanors. Hernandez earned her Juris Doctor degree at the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University where she worked as an intern for the Harris County District Attorney's Office. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from UCLA.

Hernandez has been assigned to the Criminal Law Division and she will preside in Department 47 at the Hall of Justice in Ventura. The date of her formal installation ceremony will be announced in the near future.



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Ferguson Case Orr Paterson, LLP, is proud to announce that **Norry S. Harn**, a USC and 2015 Georgetown University Law graduate, has joined our litigation department. She is an experienced civil litigator with insurance defense, environmental regulatory, and class action experience. Reach out to Norry at 805-659-6800, nharm@fcoplaw.com.



Shandra L. Todd is currently working for the Law Office of Amber Rodriguez. She has been working as a paralegal in Estate Planning, Trust Administration/ Litigation and Probate since 2012. She is excited to start her career as lawyer and enjoys the outdoors in her free time.



Ryland Gray recently passed the February Bar and started employment at Slaughter, Reagan & Cole LLP. He is involved with insurance defense litigation and looks to expand his legal horizons in the future. In his newly rediscovered spare time, Ryland enjoys being with his girlfriend and spending time with the people he loves.



Elyce Davis has been a Probate and Estate Planning Paralegal for the last 10 years. When she is sworn in as an attorney, she will be a Partner at Nelson, Comis, Kettle and Kinney LLP and plans to continue practicing in that field. She is a Ventura County native and enjoys spending time with her husband and son, going to sporting events, -and camping.



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ATTORNEY - Sanger Law Firm is an established law firm seeking an attorney committed to the highest standards of practice to join its Santa Barbara office. Civil or criminal litigation experience preferred; lateral transfers encouraged. Salary depending on experience; good benefits. Sanger Law Firm, P.C. – contact jswanson@sangerlawfirm.com or call 805-962-4887.

SENIOR ASSOCIATE ATTORNEYS Well-established Ventura County law firm specializing in Public Entity Defense seeks a Senior Associate Attorney with minimum 5 years' experience & ability to eventually handle own caseload. Advancement opportunities. Public entity defense experience preferable, but not required. Competitive salary and benefits in flexible, relaxed working environment not far from the beach. Email resume to kwood@woodfinck.com.

ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY - Cowdrey Jenkins, LLP, seeks an associate attorney for elder abuse/wrongful death/medical malpractice cases. The ideal candidate will have 7+ years of litigation experience, including trials. You bring your knowledge of civil litigation, and we will train you on the substantive law. Excellent support team and latest technology. Base salary, health/dental/vision, 401(k), reasonable hours, plus significant bonuses available. Résumé to scowdrey@cowdreyjenkins.com.

STAFF ATTORNEY - Ventura County Legal Aid seeks attorney to assist clients with a variety of civil issues. Looking for flexible team player who is willing to learn and has a passion for helping marginalized, low income individuals. Must be bilingual. Salary & benefits might be better than you expect. Please email your resume to paulbujold@vclegalaid.org.

ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY - Needed for an Awesome Growth Opportunity - Compass Legal Group, APC is a family law firm in Ventura, CA, servicing the surrounding counties. The office will be flexible for the right candidate, and looking for a CA attorney with one-year of experience in family law, or an experienced and reliable family law paralegal, who can manage multiple calendars, draft pleadings, perform billing and client intake. Pay commensurate upon experience; low billable requirement; paid MCLE (after 90-day probation). Please email your resume to james@yourlegalcompass.com for consideration.

SUB LEASE OFFICE SPACE - Large windowed office located in law office; 31355 Oak Crest Drive in Westlake Village. Office is near reception area. Office features VoIP and fiber internet. Access to shared conference rooms, kitchen, copier, and metered postage machine. Rent negotiable. Miscellaneous costs such as office supplies, internet and phone service are separate. Contact Sylvia 818-338-3252 or email swilmot@trustplanner.net

OFFICE SPACES in three lovingly restored Victorian houses, designated as Buenaventura Historical Landmarks, located next to one another, across the street from the California Court of Appeal building in Old Town Ventura. Walk to Surfers Point and the beach, or to fine restaurants on Main Street. Convenient access to the 101 freeway. Off street parking in our lot behind the Victorians. Lease one office or an entire Victorian house. Rents start at \$550/month. Common reception area. Landlord pays for utilities, janitorial service and gardening. No CAM charges. Contact Don Parrish, Esq. at 805-340-1204 or Jenny at jpjetty@beckergrp.com.

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT - Quiet office space with large windows and hillside views, shared in a two-office suite with lawyer at Maple Court. Approximately 224 sq. ft. Unfurnished on 2nd floor with elevator in building. Conference room and entry lobby area see little use. Adjacent parking. \$800 per month. Contact Steve at 805-701-5511.

LOOKING FOR PAID INTERNSHIP - Hello everyone, I am Shayonna Huley, a recent graduate of CSUCI. Currently I am seeking a paid summer internship to enhance my capabilities before pursuing law school. Available from June 1st to August 15th, I bring a diverse skill set and am eager to discuss how I can contribute to your team. My contact is Shayonnah3@gmail.com



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