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REMOTE APPEARANCES: A LOOK INTO THE PAST AND A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

By Christal Joy Porter and Alex Tron

Page 10



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GUILLERMO “BERT” PARTIDA	PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE	3
	HAVE YOU HEARD?	5
ALAN R. TEMPLEMAN	THINGS YOU HAVE NOT HEARD ABOUT RETIRED JUDGE HENRY (HARRY) J. WALSH	6
SANDRA D. RUBIO	MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS: MICHAEL A. STRAUSS AND CYNTHIA L. GONZALEZ	12
	CLASSIFIEDS	15



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Guillermo "Bert" Partida

TIME FOR FELLOWSHIP

The Ventura County Bar Association will be having its annual membership mixer (see flyer insert) on Thursday, July 17, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Copper Blues in Oxnard. For me, meeting new people is enjoyable and seeing old friends helps my spirit and creates a greater sense of belonging. Further, the Bar is your organization, and your participation in events fosters the sense of legal community. We should revel in the fact that our Bar is still small enough that we are courteous, professional, and congenial. If you have the time, I hope to see you there to share ideas and to share some fellowship.

MANDATORY PRO BONO PUBLICO REPORTING

There is a great need for pro bono attorneys in California. The State Bar of California recently released findings from its 2024 Justice Gap Study. The study found that civil legal needs of Californians are widespread and unmet at every income level, while the number of active attorneys is insufficient to meet the growing demand for legal help.

Half of the study participants reported that they would only consult a lawyer if they had no upfront costs and would only be willing to pay \$153.00 an hour.

The study also found that lawyers were turning down cases, not for a lack of merit, but for being financially unviable. Further, the study found a great need for immigration services as 20% of Californians are foreign born and approximately 5 million individuals lack U.S. citizenship. Small businesses were also facing challenges from a lack of legal professional help. Furthermore, the study noted a shift in attorney workforce with a number of counties notice a decline in active attorneys, which the study classified these areas as "attorney deserts." Moreover,



June 17, 2025 - Gabriele M. Lashly, Afred Vargas, Evelyn Curie and Guillermo "Bert" Partida are attorney volunteers at the VCLA advice clinic.

the study found most attorneys were not meeting the pro bono requirements. The study concludes that the justice gap is persistent and continues to grow.

Starting in with the 2026 fee cycle, attorneys will be required to report the amount of pro bono legal service hours performed during the prior calendar year, including the amount of hours of "reduced fee legal services" performed for a low income individual, nonprofit organization, or public law library. The State Bar encourages attorneys to provide 50 hours of pro bono activity but even a few hours will have a positive impact on underserved individuals and pro bono groups. Attorneys are also encouraged to start tracking their 2025 pro bono and reduced legal service hours now to help your reporting in 2026.

Further information on pro bono opportunities may be found at the State Bar website www.calbar.ca.gov/Access-to-Justice/Pro-Bono

VENTURA COUNTY LEGAL AID (VCLA) SEEKS ATTORNEY VOLUNTEERS

VCLA is seeking attorney volunteers and offers a good opportunity to obtain pro bono hours. It's also a good place for some fellowship. I would be curious to know how many members would be willing to take on a pro bono case from start to finish rather than just giving brief advice.

The clinic meets twice a month on Tuesdays at the Colleges of Law in Ventura from 4:45 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The next clinic will be held on July 1, 2025.



Guillermo "Bert" Partida practices law at Slaughter, Reagan & Cole, LLP in the areas of Personal Injury Defense, Premises Liability, and Habitability Defense.

He can be reached at (805) 658-7800, or by email at partida@srllplaw.com

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HAVE YOU HEARD?

SUPERIOR COURT COUNTY OF VENTURA NOTICE

Electronic Service in Civil,
Probate and Family Law Case Types
Effective July 1, 2025

Effective July 1, 2025, the Ventura Superior Court will implement electronic service of documents in Limited and Unlimited Civil, Probate, and Family Law case types. Electronic service allows for more efficient and faster transmission of documents between parties and from the Court.

Electronic service is mandatory for represented parties in Limited and Unlimited Civil and Probate cases. Any represented party who has not provided an email address to the Court must do so forthwith by filing and serving a *Notice of Change of Electronic Service Address* (Judicial Council form EFS-010) or a self-drafted form. Self-represented parties are exempt from the mandatory requirement but are encouraged to participate and must affirmatively opt in by filing and serving a

consent form: *Consent to Electronic Service and Notice of Electronic Service Address* (Judicial Council form EFS-005-CV). Self-represented parties who submitted an EFS-005-CV form in a case before July 1, 2025, must do so again to consent to electronic service.

Represented and Self-Represented parties may consent to electronic service in Family Law (and Civil Restraining Order) cases by using the EFS-005-CV form. Represented and Self-represented parties who submitted an EFS-005-CV form in a case before July 1, 2025, must do so again to consent to electronic service.

Any changes to email addresses must be promptly updated by the attorney or litigant to ensure seamless communication. *Notice of Change of Electronic Service Address* (Judicial Council form EFS-010).

For additional information see Administrative Order 25.04.

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THINGS YOU HAVE NOT HEARD ABOUT RETIRED JUDGE HENRY (HARRY) J. WALSH

By: Alan R. Templeman



At the recent Ventura County Trial Lawyers' Association Judge's Night, there were excellent tributes to recently retired **Judge Henry ("Harry") Walsh** as he was presented with the honor of having his portrait displayed in Courtroom 22. However, some things were prudently unsaid when **Judge Maureen Houska** went through Walsh's distinguished career as a civil judge. Houska *did* point out that he was admired for his temperament and skill during the 27 years he spent on the bench, and that he was ranked as one of the best and most respected civil court judges. What was not contained in Houska's speech or in the brief article in CITATIONS are the following lesser-known details that paint a fuller picture of the man behind the robe.

Despite their similar appearances, Vin Scully was not Harry Walsh's father. No, his father was a lawyer who specialized in real estate and trust law and spent a small portion of his time representing Walsh's uncle, Walter O'Malley, who eventually became the primary owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Prior to the Dodgers' move to Los Angeles in 1958, Walsh's father became the Dodgers' attorney, prompting the Walsh family to move from Long Island to Altadena.

Walsh originally aimed to become a pilot. After graduating from Stanford as an Air Force Second Lieutenant, he had been

selected to attend flight school, but a serious motor vehicle accident derailed those plans and precluded him from becoming an Air Force pilot.

Undeterred, he worked full time as an insurance adjuster for Aetna while attending four years of night school at Loyola. That same resilience showed up again in 1971, when he was hired by Fred Kosmo—unaware that the position also came with weekend duties at the Kosmo Ranch in Cuyama. But Walsh turned coal into diamonds: it was in Cuyama that he met Dee, who would become his wife of 55 years.

It was fortunate for Walsh that he married Dee, as he was a somewhat inept bachelor. When he lived alone in Oxnard, I looked into his refrigerator once and found only prune juice, beer, and cheese that had turned green. Together, he and Dee raised five children. He required them to dress up for Sunday dinners, a tradition he credits as instrumental in their success, though those who know the family would say it was the combination of phenomenal parenting from both Dee and Harry.

Professionally, Walsh tried more than 50 civil jury trials and partnered in firms such as Kosmo, Walsh & Cho; Lawler & Ellis; and Lawler, Bonham & Walsh. He also served as President of what is now the California Coast Chapter of ABOTA.

He has always been a mentor to young attorneys, beginning with teaching me the difference between interrogatories and depositions when I joined Fred Kosmo's firm a year after him. He continued mentoring throughout his legal and judicial career, playing an active role in the Inns of Court. His mentorship left a mark on many, including Howard Cho, Ken Brown, Judge Houska, and Malcolm Tator.

Although Judge Walsh primarily represented insurance companies, he earned the respect of the Plaintiffs' Bar for his competency, honesty, and trustworthiness.

His discipline extended beyond the courtroom. For years, Judge Walsh has swum laps at 5:30 a.m. at the Pierpont pool.

He swims exactly 22 laps—no more, no less. That rigor didn't translate to his musical abilities, unfortunately. After many years of singing in the choir at the Ventura Mission, he was dropped by the choir director in favor of others who could, well, actually sing.

In retirement, Harry Walsh will continue to advocate for the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, maintain his 5:30 a.m. swim routine, and remain a loyal Dodgers fan, traveling with his son to see games at ballparks throughout the major leagues.



Alan R. Templeman

is one of the principals of Lowthorp, Richards, McMillan, Miller & Templeman, APC. Templeman has been practicing law since 1972 and is known

for his expertise as trial lawyer. Templeman can be reached at (805) 981-8555 or atempleman@lrmmmt.com.



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REMOTE APPEARANCES: A LOOK INTO THE PAST AND A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

By Christal Joy Porter and Alex Tron

The ability to appear remotely for court proceedings has existed for many years, and we've written about it before in CITATIONS. With increased technology, however, remote appearance ability and effectiveness has revolutionized the experience of a regular courtroom attorney. It is an understatement to say that remote appearance technology has made courtroom appearances more convenient. Recent evolutions have created a new lifestyle for the courtroom attorney and have also has provided a more accessible platform for non-attorneys to be heard. It is hard to think about a world without systemized and streamlined remote appearance technology, unless you once lived in that world. Yet, there are drawbacks and nuisances to endure with relying on remote appearance technology for court proceedings.

First and foremost, the experience of being “in” the courtroom is lost. The structure of a courtroom holds lots of intentionality, from the height of the Judge's bench, its distance from the witness stand, its distance between the party tables, and the parties' distances from each other. There is a “weight” of courtroom proceedings that can be felt simply by the construction of the room. That weight is lost when parties and attorneys appear from the comforts of their own homes or offices. To that end, abiding by the oath to tell the truth and the ability for the Judge to assess the demeanor and credibility of witnesses and parties is that much more difficult through a virtual platform. There is a different feeling of speaking to a judge from a party table versus seeking a judge's help while you are sitting on your bed in a tank top. (Hopefully not!)

Courts have found a way over the last five years to navigate the changing landscape and usage of remote appearances. There are always kinks to work out, such as non-muted parties providing unwanted sounds over the courtroom speakers or, most recently, a system-wide crash of the Los Angeles Superior Court remote appearance platform. This required courtroom clerks to field 50 or more calls that morning from parties wanting to appear remotely, so that the clerk could provide them a phone number for a conference call. Parties, both attorneys and non-attorneys alike, have grown to heavily rely on the ability to appear for court proceedings remotely.

Ventura County Superior Court Technology

The Superior Court of Ventura County serves as an excellent example of the evolving nature of remote appearances. Currently, CourtCall and Zoom are the two major platforms/providers for remote appearances in Ventura County. CourtCall was established in 1995 by attorneys with “the desire to make remote Court Appearances simple, accessible, and affordable for all parties.” According to the CourtCall website, “CourtCall remains the industry leader in providing supported Remote Legal Collaboration services throughout the United States, Canada, and Worldwide.” At no cost, all participating Courts are provided with the necessary equipment to access the CourtCall Remote appearance platform, but the parties who utilize the technology are charged for each reservation. The costs for CourtCall reservations for remote appearances in California is \$72.00 per reservation. The costs vary by state, including the low fee of \$1.00 with the Navajo Nation court, and \$48 for each reservation in Florida courts. Historically, most courts utilize audio only on the CourtCall platform, but the platform is capable of video as well.

On the other hand, Zoom was founded in 2011 by Eric S. Yuan (CEO) to “help customers ‘work happy’ and bring people together in an AI-first work platform for human connection.” Prior to founding Zoom, Yuan was Corporate Vice President of engineering at Cisco where he was responsible for Cisco's collaboration software development. The list of California counties that use Zoom for remote appearances can be found in the May 2024 issue of CITATIONS. Parties who use the Zoom platform for remote appearances do not have to pay a fee for appearances, although the courts may pay a monthly fee to have access to the platform. Free access for users supports the goal of increasing access to justice for litigants, with the added benefit of video and audio capabilities. Typically, the Zoom platform provides an easily accessible link and the ability to hear and see courtroom proceedings. As easy as Zoom is, users may still encounter issues with utilizing Zoom, and it can be difficult to troubleshoot for

non-technology-inclined participants. We all remember the viral video of an attorney who appeared as a talking cat.

The contrast between these two providers reflects the changing technological landscape of courtrooms. At the time of its creation, the technology needed to facilitate a remote appearance system like CourtCall was expensive – which is why the “free to the courts” model make sense. Over time, the technology cost to facilitate CourtCall appearances has dropped significantly, making options like Zoom increasingly logical. In addition, market competition – compared to the single-provider option in courts that only offer CourtCall – will ideally benefit through better pricing and better service.

Each courtroom in Ventura County utilizes different remote appearance platforms and has its own procedures for using the technology. It is important to find out the platform and remote appearance procedures for the courtroom in which you intend to make a remote appearance. Some Ventura courtrooms utilize only Zoom, or CourtCall, while others utilize both platforms.

These Ventura courtrooms have CourtCall capability:

S1 (Simi Valley)	Department 40
Department 20	Department 41
Department 21	Department 42
Department 22/22B	Department 43
Department 34	

The Future

As technology evolves, access to justice must follow suit. Ventura County Superior Court has recently welcomed Kate Bieker as Court Executive Officer. Bieker and her administration team will be looking into the Court's use of technology, including remote appearance technologies and platforms.

The possibilities are limitless. One can imagine a future where virtual reality technology, such as the offerings from the Meta Quest system, is used to provide a more vivid simulation of a courtroom. Such technology is becoming more lifelike and realistic by the day. While still far away,

such a system could provide more of an “in person” courtroom feel while still providing meaningful remote access.

Platforms and providers may come and go, but the concept of remote video appearances has become an inseparable part of modern American life following the Covid-19 pandemic. No one fully knows what the future of courtroom appearances will look like for sure, but one thing is for certain – remote appearances are here to stay.



Christal Joy Porter, a graduate of Pepperdine University School of Law, is an attorney with Rodnunsky & Associates, practicing in the areas of trust and estate litigation and estate planning. She can be reached at the office at (818) 737-1090.



Alex Tron is the Social Impact Center's staff attorney specializing in reentry. He is also VCBA's section leader for Barristers. He can be reached at alex@thesocialimpactcenter.org.

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MICHAEL A. STRAUSS



Michael A. Strauss has loved to argue since he was a child, and more importantly, to stand up for what he felt was right. He also wanted to be a mediator – which is what he does now – but knew he needed litigation experience before transitioning into that field. Strauss has been a member of the California Bar and the Ventura County Bar Association since 2006, and after more than a decade practicing employment litigation, he transitioned into full-time mediation and arbitration. He now works with Judicate West, where he applies his litigation experience to help parties resolve their disputes outside of court.

Strauss grew up in Ventura and now lives in Ojai. He earned his undergraduate degree at UC Berkeley and went on to study law at

Wake Forest University School of Law. From early on, he was drawn to advocacy—not just the arguing part, but the broader idea of standing up for what's right. He always intended to be a mediator, and pursued litigation as a necessary step to get there.

He's been active in the bar community throughout his career, having served on the VCBA Board of Directors, as president of the VCBA Barristers, and CITATIONS editorial board. He is currently chairperson of the LRIS Steering Committee.

Outside of work, Strauss prioritizes family life with his three sons: Miles, Henry, and Sam. The household also includes Harry, a labradoodle. When not working or spending time with family, Strauss gets outdoors whenever possible, especially on a mountain bike. He names Nordhoff Ridge as his favorite local destination and has been

coaching youth soccer since high school.

Among his favorites: Texas-style brisket, Rory's Place in Ojai, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. His favorite author is Alexandre Dumas, whose books he's read multiple times, and he cites the First Amendment as his favorite legal principle. His favorite books, however, are the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. As for cars, he dreams of a Ferrari F40, but puts more day-to-day value on his Airstream.

If he could interview any historic figure, it would be Dumas. If he weren't practicing law, he says he'd still be mediating. His advice to all, coined originally by Abraham Lincoln, "He who represents himself has a fool for a client."

CYNTHIA L. GONZALEZ



Cynthia L. Gonzalez has practiced law in Ventura County for the past seven years, focusing on family law, estate planning, and bankruptcy. She runs her own firm, the Law Office of Cynthia L. Gonzalez, and chose law because she wanted to help people understand their legal rights.

A Ventura native now living in Oxnard, Gonzalez got her start in the legal world as a junior in high school, participating in the Ventura County Mock Trial program. She went on to earn her law degree from Whittier College of Law and has stayed closely connected to the local legal community. She currently serves on the VCBA Family Law Board and is active in Ventura Black Lawyers.

Her community involvement doesn't stop there. Gonzalez co-chairs the Public Safety Racial Equity Advisory Group, is vice-chair of the City of Oxnard Community Relations Commission, and serves with several other organizations, including the Mesa Union PFO, the Oxnard Police Chief Advisory Board, and Parents of Murdered Children. She's also a volunteer attorney with VTLA.

Gonzalez and her husband have four children, along with Wonder, their high-energy Collie-Aussie mix, aka, the "Tasmanian Devil." It is her family, and her faith, that she prizes most. When she has time to unwind, she's usually with family, watching the Dallas Cowboys, listening to Tracy Chapman, or thinking about her next visit to Italy. Local favorites include tacos, her husband's spaghetti, Asiatique Eatery, and The Cross.

Gonzalez' favorite legal statute is the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and all laws that protect individual civil rights. It is a quote from a civil rights icon that she treasures most: "Intelligence plus character – that is the true goal of education." (Martin Luther King, Jr., from "The Purpose of Education." Written for the Morehouse College campus newspaper around 1947.)

If she weren't practicing law, Gonzalez says she'd probably be working full-time as an activist or philanthropist. For now, she continues to split her time between her law practice and community service, always grounded in her values and her commitment to others.



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