



CALIFORNIA WOMEN LAWYERS  
NEWSLETTER

# Letter from the CWL President

## Naomi Dewey



**A** year into the global pandemic, California Women Lawyers has become an important voice for women working from home, struggling with court closures, and navigating a new normal. We have seen first-hand that progress towards gender equality relies on access to childcare and public education, access to healthcare, and a society that values equality in the home. The statistics are shocking – women are leaving the work force in record numbers. Now more than ever, women lawyers in California need a seat at the table.

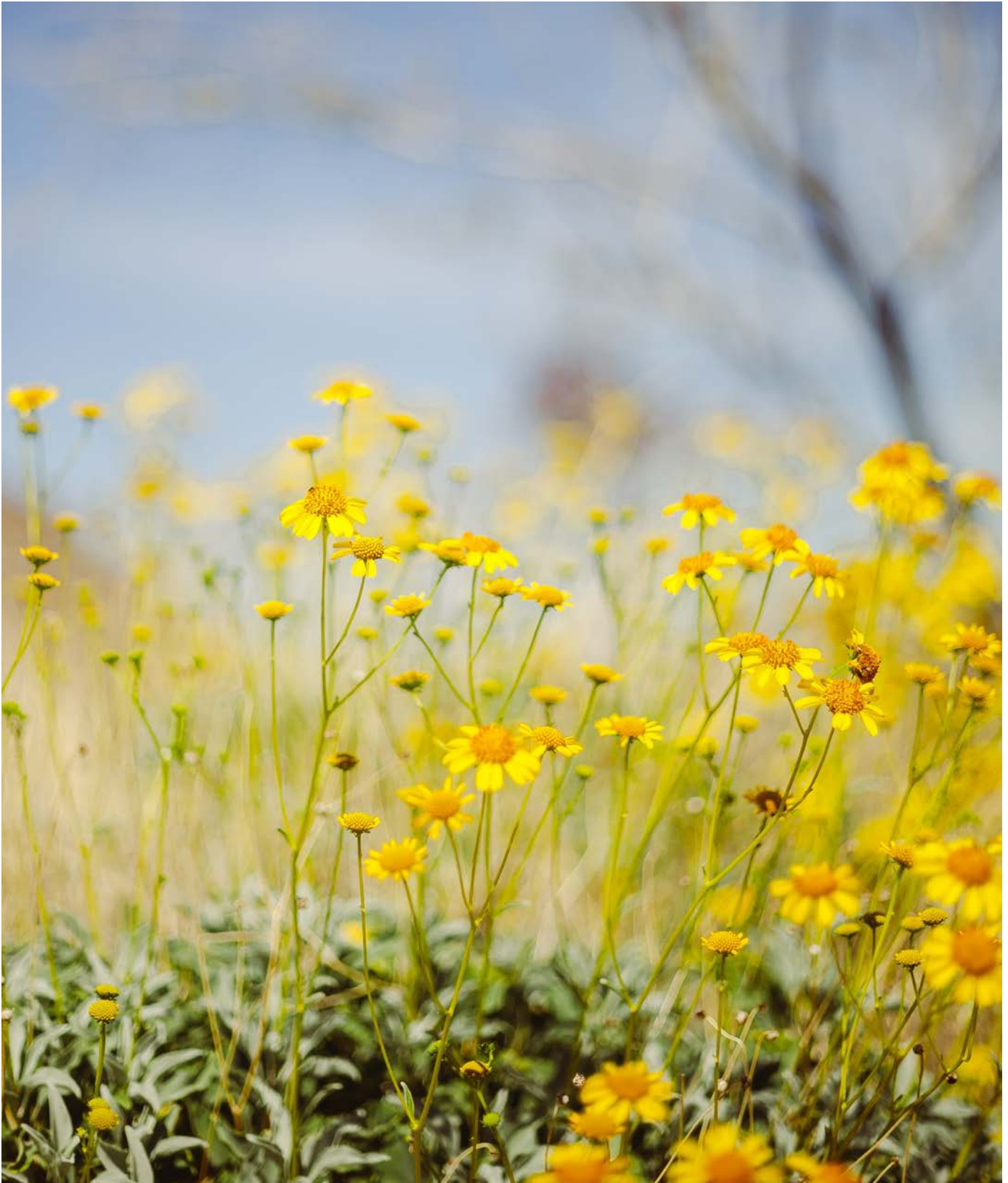
As we move into 2021, I am especially proud of the work CWL is doing to advocate for women. Our hardworking Legislative Committee is tracking and promoting new laws that will advance gender equality and enhance diversity. Our Amicus Committee has been reviewing and signing on to briefing in Supreme Court cases that influence some of our most basic human rights. Our Program Committee has been bringing the best of CWL to your office, your laptop, or your home. You are reading this magazine today because of our Communications Committee, who decided, against the odds, that we would publish CWL News despite the challenges of COVID-19. All of our hard-working governors are here to serve you, our members, and it is a privilege to lead such a dedicated team.

CWL has long been a powerful force in California decision making. On December 24, 2020, we lost our founding president, Justice Joan Dempsey Klein. You can read more about Justice Klein and her legacy in this edition of CWL News. She was an exceptional woman – small but very, very mighty. If you have memories of Justice Klein to share, please send them to us for a tribute program we are putting together. In February, we hosted our first Past President and CWL Life Member event, a virtual mixer bringing together women who have sustained and lead this organization since its inception 46 years ago. Hearing

former Congresswoman Lynn Schenk talk about the early days of CWL with civil rights advocate Dru Ramey was a highlight of my year. We will continue to bring together these inspirational women for more events.

One thing that has been especially hard for us during the pandemic has been our inability to meet in person to celebrate our CWL award winners. If you have ever attended one of our in-person events or award receptions, you will know the deep connections formed when we come together to honor our heroes. This year, don't miss our In Conversation With series, two intimate online events where we will get to know more about our Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award winner Hon. Joan P. Weber from San Diego and Fay Stender Award Winner Brenda Star Adams from Equal Rights Advocates. Both will also be honored at this year's Annual Dinner – save the date for September 10, 2021!

**Naomi Dewey, President**



# CWL

SPRING 2021  
NEWSLETTER

## **2020-21 CWL Board Officers**

**CWL President** Naomi Dewey

**CWL President-Elect** Sabrina Ashjian

**Immediate Past President** Jessica Rowe

**First Vice-President** Beth Mora

**Second Vice-President** Mika Domingo

**Secretary** Tracy Hughes

**Treasurer** Ana M. Storey

**Editor** Christine Monroe

## **Additional Photography**

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*CWL was chartered in 1974. It was organized "to advance women in the profession of law; to improve the administration of justice; to better the position of women in society; to eliminate all inequities based on sex; and to provide an organization for collective action and expression germane to the aforesaid purposes."*

*The purposes are limited to purposes meeting the requirements for exemption provided in Section 23701e of the Revenue and Taxation Code and Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code as the statutes may be amended from time to time.*

**Thank you** to all the authors in this issue for sharing with us their time and expertise.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of CWL.

For more information on CWL or this newsletter, please contact the CWL office at 916.930.9020 or visit the website at [www.cwl.org](http://www.cwl.org).



Christine Monroe  
EDITOR

I am pleased to serve as the 2020-2021 chair of the Communications Committee and Editor of the CWL Newsletter. This is my second term serving as the Affiliate Governor for Santa Barbara Women Lawyers (SBWL) on the CWL Board of Directors. I am an attorney at Greben & Associates offering environmental legal and litigation services. I handle civil environmental litigation and regulatory matters throughout California.

I also have a passion for youth outreach and mentorship. I worked as an instructor at Girls Inc. prior to becoming an attorney. I continue to mentor pre-law and law students, and recently created a scholarship through SBWL to serve the needs of students. I am excited this year to serve on the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee with a focus on youth outreach for students interested in pursuing a law career.

Although the newsletter has been dormant over the last year, CWL certainly was not. Faced with a global pandemic, a plea for social and racial justice, and mourning the loss of fearless leaders including Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and our founding mother, Justice Joan Dempsey Klein, CWL stepped up using its platform as a voice and support.

Inside the Spring 2021 Newsletter, CWL recaps many of our 2020 programs and events, presented in a virtual format during the pandemic. While we are still staying home and socially distancing, we cannot wait until we can begin holding events safely in person again.

As we close out Women's History Month, we celebrate the "breaking the glass-ceiling moment" earlier this year as we witnessed Kamala Harris become the Country's first female, first Black American, and first South Asian American Vice President of the United States as she was sworn in by Justice Sotomayor.

With a mix of highs and lows over the last year, one thing remains true, we always want to hear good news! Congratulations to Grainne Callan who received the Torch Award and Beth Mora who received the Strike Force One Award from California Employment Lawyers Association! CWL is fortunate to have both of these dedicated leaders serving on the CWL board of directors.

Please tell us when you have won an honor or award, a special achievement, or legal victory. Contact us at [newsletter@cw.org](mailto:newsletter@cw.org).

Christine Monroe  
Editor, CWL Newsletter





*Justice Klein | Photo courtesy of  
National Association of Women Judges*

# IN MEMORY OF JUSTICE JOAN DEMPSEY KLEIN

Justice Klein was a founding mother of California Women Lawyers, serving as president of CWL at our inception. Justice Klein went on to found, and serve as the first president of, the National Association of Women Judges. She was also key to the creation of the International Association of Women Judges. Justice Klein served on and was an active member of countless other organizations dedicated to the advancement of women in the legal profession. She remained active in CWL and was a life member of our organization. In 1994, CWL honored Justice Klein by establishing an award for judicial excellence in her name. Fittingly, she was the first recipient.

Justice Klein graduated from San Diego State University in 1947 and from UCLA School of Law in 1955. She practiced in the state Attorney General's office until 1962, when she was appointed to the municipal court. She was appointed to the Court of Appeal by Governor Brown in 1978. She was serving as Presiding Justice of the Second District Court of Appeal when she stepped down in 2015, ending one of California's longest careers as a judicial officer.

A mother of five, she was also a mother to all of us who follow in her footsteps. May her memory be a blessing to all.



To commemorate the life Joan Dempsey Klein, a founding mother of CWL and all around amazing person, CWL is requesting submission of pictures, memories, anything of the late Joan Dempsey Klein. Please send to CWL, 2520 Venture Oaks Way, Suite #150, Sacramento, CA 95833 or email to [texcinia@cwI.org](mailto:texcinia@cwI.org). We will prepare a tribute and circulate among our members.

# Meet the New CWL District Governors

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## **Kathleen Kehoe Greeson | District 1**

Kathleen Kehoe Greeson was elected to a first term as District 1 Governor, representing Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, and Yuba Counties. Greeson is a Chief Deputy County Counsel in the Butte County Counsel's Office in Oroville, where she represents County departments, elected officials and special districts in transactional and litigation matters. Her work currently focuses on health and human services and disaster recovery. Until 2007, Greeson was an associate at Fenwick & West LLP, where she represented corporate clients in the technology sector.

Currently, Greeson serves on the Governance Committee, Judicial Committee and Membership Committee for CWL.



## **Beth Mora | District 3**

Beth W. Mora serves as the District 3 Governor, representing Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara Counties. Mora of Mora Employment Law is dedicated to representing victimized employees. She is a zealous and skilled advocate for those facing a wide range of employment law issues. Her commitment to social justice and volunteerism is deeply rooted in her personal values, to repair the world. Due to her advocacy, Mora has been quoted in legal journals, including Bloomberg Law, Daily Journal and Law 360 on issues impacting employees and the legal community. From the courthouse to the board.

In addition with her many legal volunteer activities, Mora is a Board of Director for Skate Like A Girl. Skate Like a Girl (SLAG) is a nonprofit organization empowering individuals, especially young women and trans people, to become strong, confident leaders who promote and implement equity through the vehicle of skateboarding. Mora is the CWL First Vice President and co-chair of the Gender Equity Task Force.



## **Sally Noma | District 3**

Sally Noma was elected to her first term as District 3 Governor, representing Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. Noma is the founding attorney of Noma Law Firm APC specializing in large loss property subrogation throughout California. She has litigated catastrophic property damage cases on behalf of the largest insurance carriers. Prior to the PG&E bankruptcy of 2019, she led discovery for the Subrogation Plaintiffs in key aspects of the landmark 2017 North Bay Fires litigation, which totaled more than \$10 billion in insured losses. Noma is actively involved in the insurance industry. She is a member of Claims and Litigation Management Alliance where she serves on the Diversity and Inclusion and Subrogation Committees. She is a frequent speaker and sponsor of National Association of Subrogation Professionals and currently serves on the Legislative Affairs Committee.

Noma currently serves on the Programming and Judicial Evaluations Committees with CWL. In her spare time, she is an active volunteer with Fresh Lifelines for Youth, educating youth involved in the juvenile justice system and those at risk about the law and their rights.





### **Melissa Gardener | District 4**

Melissa Gardner was elected to a second term as District 4 Governor, representing San Francisco and Marin Counties. She is a partner at Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP in San Francisco, where she litigates consumer protection and data privacy class actions in state and federal court.

Gardener currently serves as Chair of the CWL Legislative Committee, coordinating CWL's work on important policy issues such as reproductive justice, violence against women, human rights, access to justice, and economic inequality. She has also served on the Annual Dinner Committee.



### **Melissa Marsh | District 5**

Melissa Marsh serves as the District 5 Governor, representing Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, Monterey, San Benito, San Joaquin, Santa Cruz, Stanislaus and Tulare Counties. She has served on the CWL Board since 2016, having represented Fresno County Women Lawyers as an Affiliate Governor until her appointment to District Governor in 2020. Marsh is a Deputy District Attorney in Fresno County.

Marsh currently serves on the Judicial Committee for which she has planned and moderated the "So, You Want to be a Judge?" event for the last two years. She is also a two time president of Fresno County Women Lawyers.



### **Jaimi Goothius | District 7**

Jaimi Goothius was appointed to a first term as District 7 Governor, one of five board members representing Los Angeles County. She is a partner at Bentley & More LLP in Newport Beach, California, where she advocates for plaintiffs in products liability, construction site accidents, workers compensation, and other catastrophic personal injuries.

Goothius has previously served two terms on CWL's Board of Governors where she co-chaired the Awards Committee and served on the Judicial and Amicus Brief Committees.



### **Maya Shulman | District 7**

Maya Shulman serves as the District 7 Governor, one of five board members representing Los Angeles County. Maya Shulman is the founder of Shulman Family Law Group, and represents clients in Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties dealing with issues of family law, including divorce and custody. She is adept at handling complex matters, including move-away cases, interstate and international family law, surrogacy, adoption and assisted reproduction. Shulman studied medicine at the Medical Academy in Latvia, earned a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Brooklyn College in 1995, and her Juris Doctor from the University of West Los Angeles School of Law in 1999. She is admitted to practice in Massachusetts and California, before the Supreme Court of California, the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, and the U. S. Supreme Court.

Highly regarded for her legal skills and experience, Shulman has been recognized as a Southern California Super Lawyer every year since 2014, and as a Southern California Rising Star for 2004 through 2014. In addition to English, she speaks Russian, and understands Hebrew and the Slavic languages of Eastern Europe. She serves on CWL's Judicial Committee and Programs Committee.



### **Ana Storey | District 7**

Ana M. Storey was elected to a third term as District 7 Governor, one of five board members representing Los Angeles County. She is the executive director of a private non-profit law firm, LevittQuinn Family Law Center, that provides free and sliding-scale family law help to persons with low-incomes throughout Los Angeles County.

Storey currently serves in her second term as treasurer of CWL. She chairs CWL's Awards Committee, overseeing the nomination and honoree recognition process for CWL's four prestigious annual awards, including the new "In Conversation With" virtual events designed to highlight each honoree as part of the CWL at Home series. Storey also serves on CWL's Executive and Governance Committees, and is a liaison to the Executive Committee of the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Family Law Section and a member of Women Lawyers of Los Angeles' Career Development & Life Balance Committee.



### **Tracy Hughes | District 8**

Tracy Hughes serves as the District 8 Governor, representing Orange County. She joined the CWL board in 2019 as the affiliate governor from the Orange County Women Lawyers Association. She chaired the CWL Membership Committee, and continues in this role. She is on the CWL Board Executive Committee serving as Secretary, and serves on the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Hughes has also been on the Board of Orange County Women Lawyers since 2018.

Hughes joined the newly formed Los Angeles County Counsel Affirmative Litigation and Consumer Protection Division in April 2020 and is the division's Consumer Protection team leader. She evaluates and initiates new actions on behalf of the County Counsel. Hughes moved to the Affirmative Litigation County Counsel team from the Orange County District Attorney's Office, where she was the Assistant Head of Court for Consumer and Environmental Protection. She has prosecuted a wide variety of criminal and civil cases, and has extensive courtroom and jury trial experience. She led the California Food, Drug and Medical Device Task Force from 2012-2020, and was commissioned by the Food and Drug Administration to facilitate collaborative public health enforcement actions from 2012-2020.



### **Tracy Schimelfenig | District 9**

Tracy Schimelfenig was elected to her first term as a District 9 Governor, representing San Diego and Imperial Counties. Schimelfenig is an attorney with the law firm California Business Law Group, where she represents businesses and individuals in complex business, intellectual property and trusts and estates litigation. She also provides outside general counsel services to businesses and non-profits. Schimelfenig is a fierce advocate for her clients in negotiations and at trial.

Schimelfenig serves as a co-chair of CWL's Sponsorship Committee and is active on the Programming and Annual Dinner Committees. She is a former Director of Lawyers Club of San Diego, where she served as Vice President of Finance & Fundraising and Treasurer. In 2018, Schimelfenig had the pleasure of co-chairing the Lawyers Club Annual Dinner with keynote speaker, former United States Attorney General, Loretta Lynch. She is also a former board member of the San Diego Bankruptcy Forum, serving as President in 2012.



# Nominations for the CWL Board of Governors

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Election of several CWL District Governors, for two-year terms starting in September 2021, will commence over the next two months. CWL is accepting applications of candidates for election to vacant District Governor seats in the following districts through April 30, 2021.

District governors serve two-year terms and may serve for up to three consecutive terms. They may serve additional terms after a one-year absence from the board.

## **DISTRICT 2 (ONE SEAT)**

Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Napa, Sacramento, Solano, Sonoma, Tuolumne, and Yolo Counties

## **DISTRICT 3 (ONE SEAT)**

Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties

## **DISTRICT 4 (ONE SEAT)**

San Francisco and Marin Counties

## **DISTRICT 6 (ONE SEAT)**

Riverside, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties

## **DISTRICT 7 (TWO SEATS)**

Los Angeles County

## **DISTRICT 9 (ONE SEAT)**

San Diego and Imperial Counties



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## HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates should submit a current resume and a candidate's statement of no more than one half (1/2) typewritten page in length no later than the close of business, April 30, 2021 via email to [texcinia@cwll.org](mailto:texcinia@cwll.org) or mailed to: Nominating Committee, CWL, 2520 Venture Oaks Way, Suite #150, Sacramento, CA 95833.

For further information, or sample candidates' statements, please contact Teresa Excinia at (916) 930-9020 or by email at [texcinia@cwll.org](mailto:texcinia@cwll.org).

## DISTRICT GOVERNOR RESPONSIBILITIES

District Governors attend six Board meetings per year at locations throughout the state. They also participate in committees, plan events, recruit new CWL members, and assist in running the organization.

### Why should you run:

- Because CWL's influence and effectiveness grow with every smart, energetic woman who gets involved;
- Because you will get to know nice, smart, committed women from all over the state;
- Because it is important that every district have a representative on the Board of Governors.
- If you don't run, who will? Don't sit back and wait for other women to run. If you are committed to the future of women lawyers in California, send in your application.

### Who is eligible to run:

To be eligible, you must be an active member of the State Bar of California, in good standing and also a Class 1 CWL member in good standing.

Class 1 members must be:

- A member in good standing of the State Bar of California;
- A judge of a court of record in the State of California;
- A full-time member of the faculty or a dean of a law school in the State of California;
- A member in good standing of the Bar of another state;
- A law student attending a California law school;
- A California resident who has graduated from a law school within the last three years and not yet admitted to the State Bar of California, but only upon written application to the corporation's principal offices and upon timely payment of dues; or
- Governors are required to have their principal business office or residence in the geographical District the Governors represent.



## CWL At Home: A 2020 Recap

BY SHANNON FINNLEY

Women lawyers in California have been uniquely impacted by issues facing the legal profession during the global pandemic. To bring resources, community and connection to members, CWL launched CWL At Home in the spring of 2020. CWL At Home is a series of online programs that range from tailored legal updates to groups to provide support. The diversity in programming offered in 2020 provided a wide spectrum of options for our members.

Knowing that wellness and mental health were critically important, CWL mobilized to provide programming to assist members who were struggling (or just coping) with the global pandemic. Members benefited from events featuring experts in the mental health and wellness arena. These programs included: Mindfully Transitioning to Your New Normal; Coping with Stress, Anxiety and Depression During COVID-19; and Mindfulness and Well-Being for Lawyers - Another Path to Competence.

CWL also offered programs to support members with similar interests. The first CWL at Home program featured the multi-talented attorney and Soprano opera singer Lilia Bulgucheva singing some of her favorite arias. There were two programs for members who shared an interest in gardening. There were also two programs for expecting mothers about expecting during the unexpected pandemic. Another program focused on how to survive the COVID-19 crisis with children and juggling remote learning.

Programs that served as resources for members navigating the new normal were well-attended. Ergonomics Assessment Webinar Tips and Tricks for Your Home Office offered practical tips from expert Joannie Lee about how to adapt your workspace at home to be functional and comfortable. A legal update about childcare and leave issues was helpful for employers and members alike who struggled with having children partic-

ipate in school remotely from home. The Litigation Tips During A Pandemic program covered topics including best practices for remote depositions, and how to move your case forward while courts were closed. Professional coach Martha Sullivan presented "How to Make it Rain When You Can't Go Outside" to assist members with business development during the state-wide lock down.

During the summer, the fight for equity, diversity, and inclusion reached unprecedented levels of participation. Large masses of people participated in marches and rallies both in California and across the country. CWL's Legislative Committee presented on how to advocate for legislation from home. Entertainment attorney Natasha Chee shared her experience and discussed the laws and regulations protecting and promoting diversity and inclusion in the entertainment industry. Embracing Invisible Disabilities - Ending the Silence of Shame highlighted attorneys with invisible disabilities and their unique challenges. Diversity, equity and inclusion expert and social entrepreneur, Deanna Singh, shared an actionable process that leaders can go through to help think through their next steps. In Criminal Justice Reform as it Relates to Women and People of Color, Tracy Macuga, Chief Defender of Santa Barbara County, and Adrian Galvan, chair of the Santa Barbara Public Defender's Racial Justice Committee discussed racial and gender disparities in the criminal justice system and how to support the fight for gender and racial equality. CWL also hosted a screening of the documentary Belly of the Beast about the discovery of a disturbing pattern of illegal sterilizations in California women's prisons and continuing through the uphill legal battle against the California Department of Corrections.

The Lunch with Leaders series celebrated the 100 year anniversary of women's right to vote by highlighting one leader

## Thank You 2020 Presenters!

during the noon hour. Leaders shared their background and experiences with our members. This series provides an insider's look into the careers of incredible leaders, and provides members the opportunity to ask them questions. Leaders featured in 2020 included: Ann M. Ravel (Candidate for the California State Senate and Former Chair of the Federal Election Commission) and Sydney Kamlager (Assemblymember for the 54<sup>th</sup> Assembly District).

The "In Conversation with" Series featured the 2020 CWL award recipients. Although CWL was unable to honor these prestigious awardees in person through our signature events, the virtual presentations allowed for a broader audience.

Inspirational judges and attorneys provided an intimate look into their paths to success, obstacles, and advice to others. CWL 2020 Fay Stender Award recipient Rose Carmen Goldberg joined her mentor Associate Justice Eileen C. Moore, the CWL 2009 Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award recipient, to discuss their experience as women legal professionals committed to addressing military sexual trauma and the causes of veteran homelessness. CWL 2020 Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award recipient Magistrate Judge Louise LaMothe spoke with Administrative Presiding Justice Judith McConnell, the 1995 recipient of the Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award, about their work and advocacy for gender equality and elimination of bias toward women in the courtroom. CWL 2020 Judith Soley Lawyer as Citizen Award recipient Laura W. Brill and Bonnie Boswell discussed organizing, transformative relationships, and how to think about the role of the individual in building a vibrant and interconnected democracy. CWL 2020 Rose Bird Memorial Award recipient Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge Anita Santos and CWL board member Pa'tanisha Davis Pierson had an inspirational discussion about the value of "never giving up" and how overcoming challenges can lead to a vibrant and rewarding life of service.

The Coffee & Connect series continues to occur the first Monday of the month at 10:00 am. This morning chat gives members, and non-members interested in CWL, an opportunity to connect to each other in a virtual setting. The Wine Down Wednesday series is scheduled at 6:00 pm on the first Wednesday of the month for members to connect over a virtual happy hour.

In 2021, we are looking forward to building on the success of CWL at Home with more beneficial programming for our members. If you have an idea for a program you would like to see, or are interested in presenting, please contact Shannon Finley at [shinley@pettitkohn.com](mailto:shinley@pettitkohn.com) or at (858) 755-8500.



Shannon R. Finley serves on the CWL Board of Governors as Affiliate Governor for Lawyers Club of San Diego. She also chairs CWL's Programming Committee. She is a shareholder practicing employment law defense at Pettit Kohn Ingrassia Lutz & Dolin in San Diego.

- Sabrina Ashjian
- Michelle Barnett Batista
- Kristin Blocher
- Bonnie Boswell
- Laura W. Brill
- Lilia Bulgucheva
- Kellee Cathey
- Cynthia Chandler
- Natasha S. Chee
- Pa'tanisha Davis Pierson
- Danielle De Smeth
- Naomi Dewey
- Mika Domingo
- Emily Doskow
- Michelle Ferber
- Shannon Finley
- Adrian Galvan
- Julie Ann Giammona
- Rose Carmen Goldberg
- Ret. California State Senator Hannah Beth Jackson
- Sydney Kamlager
- Magistrate Judge Louise LaMothe
- Joannie Lee
- Tracy Macuga
- Administrative Presiding Justice Judith McConnell
- Cami McLaren
- Amee Mikacich
- Christine Monroe
- Associate Justice Eileen C. Moore
- Beth Mora
- Sally Noma
- Ann M. Ravel
- Jessica Rowe
- Alexandra Saddik
- Judge Anita Santos
- Deanna Singh
- Ana Storey
- Nicole Sugnet
- Martha Sullivan

# CWL Announces Winners of 2021 Annual Awards

BY ANA STOREY

California Women Lawyers is pleased to announce the 2021 winners of two of our signature awards. CWL will present the Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award and the Fay Stender Award at the annual dinner set for this fall. CWL will also spotlight each award recipient through our signature CWL at Home event, "In Conversation With", which highlights important topics on issues central to the CWL mission. The virtual program featuring Ms. Adams is set for May 20 and Judge Weber's will be held on June 17.

## JOAN DEMPSEY KLEIN DISTINGUISHED JURIST AWARD

**Hon. Joan P. Weber, Superior Court of California, County of San Diego**

The Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award honors a Southern California judge each year, recognizing excellence as a jurist and longstanding vigorous service and inspiration to the women lawyers of California.

San Diego Superior Court Judge Joan P. Weber will receive the 2021 Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award. Currently serving in the criminal trials division of the San Diego Superior Court, Judge Weber was the youngest person to ever serve on what was then the Municipal Court when she joined the bench in 1990.

A graduate of The Ohio State University and the University of Arizona School of Law, Judge Weber served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of California and in private civil practice in Arizona before Governor George Deukmejian appointed her to the bench. Her leadership roles have included supervising the court's criminal division in the mid-1990s, the North County Division in the early 2000s, and as Presiding Judge of the Appellate Division. She led the first all-female executive team during her tenure as president of the California Judge's Association. As a fellow judicial officer wrote, "Like Justice Klein in her efforts on behalf of our system of



justice, Judge Weber has been a mentor and an inspiration to women lawyers and judges alike, as well as to countless young people she has encouraged to pursue a career in the law."

In all her roles, Judge Weber has tirelessly pursued judicial and legislative changes to address shortfalls in funding and inequities in the administration of justice. Long a champion of advancing women in the law, Judge Weber has served as both formal and informal mentor to numerous women, some of whom have gone on to serve as judicial officers themselves. One of the issues closest to her heart is civics and community education, including using creative storytelling tools to teach children about the law.

CWL established the "Distinguished Jurist" award in 1994. Its first recipient was Justice Joan Dempsey Klein (Dec), a CWL founder and a champion of women's rights.





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## FAY STENDER AWARD

### Brenda Star Adams

San Francisco attorney Brenda Star Adams will be honored with CWL's 2021 Fay Stender Award.

The award, named for Bay Area attorney Fay Stender who passed away in 1980, is given to a feminist attorney, who, like Stender, is committed to the representation of women, disadvantaged groups and unpopular causes, and whose courage, zest for life and demonstrated ability to effect change as a single individual makes her a role model for women attorneys.

Currently serving as Senior Counsel in Education Equity and Litigation at Equal Rights Advocates (ERA) in San Francisco, Adams leads ERA's sexual violence litigation and education equity work, including setting strategic goals, developing impact litigation strategies, leading impact litigation teams, managing pre-litigation advocacy, and providing technical support on legislative efforts.

A graduate of the University of California, San Diego and New England Law, Adams has also devoted her considerable energy, ability, and passion to advocating in and out of the courtroom for those seeking relief from abuse and discrimination. Whether through direct representation, leading impact litigation teams, or working on legislative change, Brenda is a zealous advocate for persons who have suffered discrimination and abuse. With media appearances, writings, and trainings too numerous to list, Adams has sought to shine a bright light on some of the most insidious behaviors and policies that directly impact the ability to be safe and thrive at home, school, and



work. As one of her former colleagues wrote of Adams, "Her passion to conquer the inherent injustice that accompanies poverty, racism, and sexism made her a force to be reckoned with. Through her tireless efforts she inspired her colleagues, instilled a sense of confidence and reassurance in her clients, and restored human dignity one case at a time."



Ana M. Storey serves on the CWL Board of Governors as Treasurer and as a District 7 Governor, representing Los Angeles County. She also chairs CWL's Awards Committee. She is executive director of the nonprofit law firm LevittQuinn Family Law Center in Los Angeles.



# Diversity of CWL and the Legal Profession

BY CHRISTINE MONROE

The University of San Francisco defines privilege to mean “un-earned access to social power based on membership in a dominant social group.” [<https://guides.usfca.edu/white-privilege-resource-guide>] CWL was formed in response to the privilege based on gender in the legal profession and society.

CWL continues its work to eliminate all inequities based on gender, including issues that affect women of diverse backgrounds. Last year, CWL issued a Gender Definition Position Statement making our mission clear and representative:

*Gender for the purposes of the California Women Lawyers’ Mission is best described as a spectrum. For many it is fluid. Everyone defines and expresses their gender for themselves. California Women Lawyers welcomes persons of all gender identities and expressions.*

This year, CWL is updating its membership profile to allow members to voluntarily share information about their race/origin, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, and disability. The information will be kept confidential and used only for purposes of the administration of the organization. It will not be publicly published to the website at this time, and it will never be published without prior consent. Your participation is key to ensure that there is thorough data for CWL to evaluate membership and establish targeted goals to improve diversity within the organization.

**Methodology.** In 2019, the California State Bar collected voluntary data under a California Attorney Census. Approximately 95,000 attorneys licensed in California participated. The State Bar issued its first annual report card offering, in part, the following findings, or [download the report](#).

- Women comprise half of California’s adult population, but they account for only 42 percent of California attorneys. Slightly less than one percent of the attorney population identifies with more than one gender category. Comparable data for the statewide population is not available although a 2016 study found that .76 percent of adults in California identify as transgender.
- White attorneys account for nearly 70 percent of California’s active licensed attorney population, while people of color constitute 60 percent of the state’s population. Latinos, in particular, are underrepresented among California attorneys in comparison to their representation statewide: this group comprises 36 percent of the state’s population yet accounts for a mere 7 percent of all of California’s licensed active attorneys.
- More than one-in-five Californians report having at least one

form of disability that limits activities and self-care. These include mobility issues, cognitive impairments, and vision and hearing impairments. In contrast, only 5 percent of attorney respondents report living with a disability.

The categories and results of the State Bar’s study play an important role for the purpose of understanding the diversity of CWL. CWL has decided to adopt the State Bar’s study parameters as a measure to understand how CWL fairs against the statewide figures, even though the traditional options may be perceived as lending from complacency. There will also be an opportunity to add a specific response where your identity does not fit reasonably within the listed options. This will help CWL advocate for more representative categories.

**Privacy and Data Use.** While all backgrounds should be celebrated, CWL is mindful that the sensitivity of this information will vary based on each individual’s comfort level. Member responses will be voluntary, confidential, and most importantly, CWL will not sell your information. All evaluation and reporting of data will be done generally.

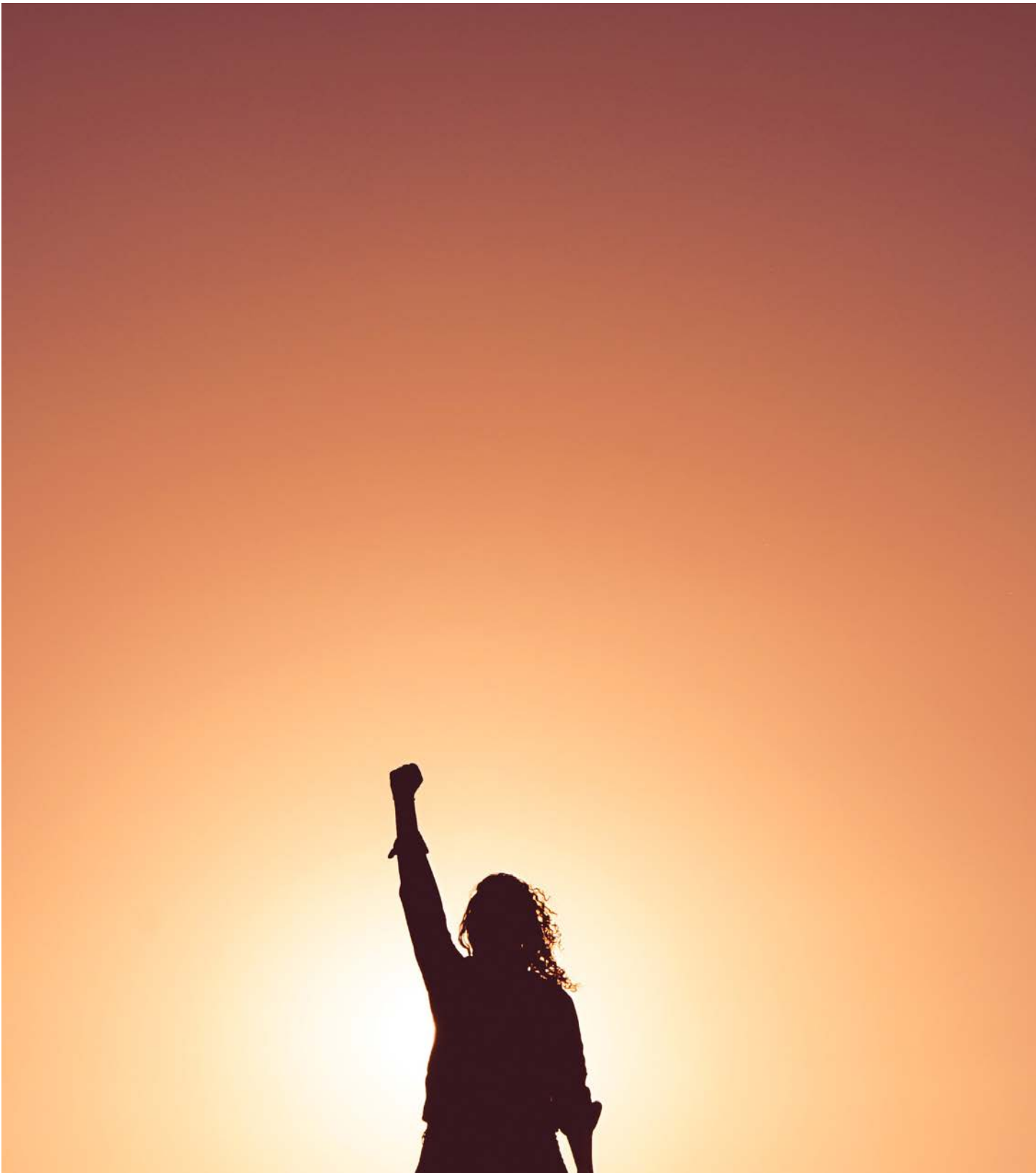
CWL is working on targeted goals for how to evaluate and use the data. First, CWL is committed to a diverse and representative membership. The State Bar concluded in its 2019 report card that the “state’s attorney population does not reflect its diversity.” CWL plans to evaluate the diversity existing within our organization and create targeted goals to increase diversity in membership of attorneys throughout the state.

Second, CWL is committed to offering expansive programs to meet the diverse needs of membership. CWL plans to use the data to better understand the uses of membership and programs. CWL will create goals to offer a variety of programs that serve the different subsets of members to ensure there are benefits for all.

CWL needs your participation because you can’t change what you don’t measure! Keep an eye out for more information about how to complete your CWL member profile in the near future.



Christine Monroe is an attorney at Greben & Associates practicing environmental litigation and handling regulatory matters. She is an affiliate governor for Santa Barbara Women Lawyers and is the communications committee chair, and serves on the equity, diversity, and inclusions committee.



# CWL Joins Amicus Briefs

## Involving transgender rights, workplace discrimination, access to healthcare, and police treatment of sexual assault survivors

BY JODI CLEESATTLE

CWL is off to a busy year of amicus activity, as the board already has joined several amicus briefs addressing issues related to discrimination based on gender, gender identity and race, healthcare access issues and equity, and fair treatment of sexual assault survivors.

CWL partners with organizations such as the National Women's Law Center to evaluate opportunities to join amicus briefs that support CWL's mission of bettering the position of women in society, eliminating gender inequality, advancing women in the law, and improving the administration of justice. CWL also supports intersectionality and is committed to eliminating discrimination against people of color and LGBTQ individuals.

### Transgender Rights

CWL joined an amicus brief filed December 21, 2020 by the National Women's Law Center and Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in *Hecox v. Little*, Case Nos. 20-35813, 20-35815, a case pending in the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

The case involves a challenge to an Idaho law that bans transgender and intersex women and girls from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity. The ACLU challenged the law on behalf of Lindsay Hecox, a transgender woman college student who seeks to compete on the Boise State University cross country team, and Jane Doe, a cisgender female high school athlete, and obtained a preliminary injunction on their equal protection claim, which the state appealed.

The amicus brief focuses on the ways the Idaho law violates Title IX, particularly in light of the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*. The brief also focuses on the broader harms to all women and girls that flow from the law, which is exceedingly broad in scope. Excluding all transgender women and girls from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity has detrimental physical and psychological impacts on these student athletes and others, and the "sex verification" provision could result in any woman or girl who does not conform to stereotypes about femininity being subjected to invasive and humiliating tests. The amicus brief also discusses how policies like the Idaho law create particular harms for Black and brown girls and women, given the history

of stereotypes regarding athleticism, biology, and gender that are applied to women and girls of color.

One of the attorneys who filed the appellate brief on behalf of the female athletes, Elizabeth Prelogar, is now Acting U.S. solicitor general. Prelogar, then a partner at Cooley in Washington, D.C., was a former assistant to the U.S. solicitor general who was a legal adviser in the special counsel probe of Russian interference in the 2016 election. She returned to the solicitor general's office, joining the Biden administration as the principal deputy U.S. solicitor general, in January.

On February 24, the U.S. Department of Justice withdrew an amicus brief it had filed in support of the Idaho law in November during the Trump administration.

Oral argument in the case is set for May 3.

### Ministerial Exception as Grounds for Discrimination

CWL joined an amicus brief filed January 19 by the National Women's Law Center in *Tucker v. Faith Bible Chapter International*, Case No. 20-1230, a Tenth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals case involving the ministerial exception, which bars the application of anti-discrimination laws to religious institutions' employment relationships with its "ministers."

In *Tucker*, a religious school claims that the ministerial exception permitted it to fire a science teacher who had invited speakers to a school assembly to talk about racism and how students could be more respectful of each other, after the teacher had observed racial harassment of students and suffered harassment himself after he adopted a Black daughter. The district court denied the school's summary judgment motion, holding that there were factual disputes as to whether the teacher was a "minister" under the exception, and the school appealed.

The amicus brief addresses the specific harms to women, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and others at risk for discrimination in the workplace, including harassment and wage-and-hour violations, through an unwarranted expansion of the ministerial exception to avoid workers' civil rights protections.

Oral arguments before the Tenth Circuit are set for May 11.

*continues on page 22*

## Work Requirements for Medicaid Benefits

CWL joined an amicus brief filed by the National Women's Law Center and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law on February 24 in *Cochran v. Gresham* (and consolidated cases) in the U.S. Supreme Court. The amicus brief was filed in support of the plaintiffs-respondents in *Cochran v. Gresham et al.*, *Cochran v. Philbrick et al.*, and *Arkansas v. Gresham et al.* (Nos. 20-37 and 20-38). These cases involve challenges to HHS' approval, under the Trump administration, of Medicaid demonstration projects in Arkansas and New Hampshire that impose work requirements as a condition for receiving Medicaid benefits.

The circuit and district courts below held that HHS' approval of the demonstration projects was arbitrary and capricious in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act because the agency failed to consider that the projects will result in a loss of health coverage, which is directly at odds with the principal purpose of the Medicaid Act.

In this brief, the amici argue that the Supreme Court should affirm the decisions below invalidating the projects. The amici highlight the devastating impact that the Medicaid work requirements will have on women and people of color, and especially on women of color. The brief also includes data on the impact of these projects on LGBTQ individuals. The brief argues that the impacted groups disproportionately rely upon Medicaid and are likely to lose health coverage under the Arkansas and New Hampshire projects, and that this loss of coverage will exacerbate existing health and economic disparities. The brief emphasizes that the COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously makes it harder for individuals to satisfy work requirements while also compounding the health and economic consequences that will result from loss of health coverage in this moment.

The Biden administration is reversing the work-requirement policy, and just prior to NWLC filing the amicus brief, the government filed a motion asking the Supreme Court to vacate the circuit court decisions, instruct the court below to remand the matters to HHS, and remove the cases from the argument calendar. Arkansas opposed the motion, but the Supreme Court announced March 11 that it was removing the cases from the March 29 argument calendar.

The Supreme Court has not yet acted on the government's request to vacate the two lower-court decisions at issue. Those decisions – both from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit – found that the Trump administration's approval of work requirements in the Medicaid programs of Arkansas and New Hampshire violated federal law.

## Fair Treatment of Sexual Assault Survivors

CWL joined an amicus brief filed by the National Women's Law Center March 23 in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in *Chase v. Nodine's Smokehouse, Inc.*, No. 20-3234, an important case asserting the rights of survivors of sexual assault, particularly those who are low-wage workers, to fair, impartial treatment both in the workplace and when reporting sexual assault to the police.

In this case, a woman who was sexually assaulted by her supervisor at the restaurant where she worked promptly reported the assault to the police. But rather than bring charges against the assailant, the police later arrested the woman for allegedly making a false report of assault, contending that she had not detailed the sexual assault in her initial report. The woman asserts various legal claims against her assailant, the restaurant, individual police officers, and the local police department, including claims that the police response to her report of sexual assault constituted sex discrimination in violation of the Equal Protection Clause.

The federal district court in Connecticut denied summary judgment on all claims (except an emotional distress claim against a municipal defendant), and defendants have filed an interlocutory appeal, challenging, among other issues, the District Court's conclusion that the police are not shielded by qualified immunity as to the Equal Protection Clause claims.

The amicus brief presents social science research and legal precedents explaining the dynamics of sexual assault and how sexual assault survivors interact with law enforcement; explaining how the police department's response to the client's report of sexual assault – including bringing charges against the client for false reporting – reflects gender bias; and explaining how and why gender bias by law enforcement may harm survivors of sexual assault, the vast majority of whom are women, and thus violate the Equal Protection Clause.

Copies of all of the amici briefs CWL joins can be found on the CWL website at <https://cwl.org/amicus> shortly after they have been filed. If you would like to join CWL's Amicus Committee, or you'd like CWL to consider drafting or signing onto an amicus brief, please contact us at [amicus@cwl.org](mailto:amicus@cwl.org).



Jodi Cleesattle is a CWL District Governor and co-chair of CWL's Amicus Committee. She is a Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the California Department of Justice, where she works in the Employment and Administrative Mandate Section in San Diego.

## “The First, But Not The Last”

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This year marks an important moment in history as Vice President Kamala Harris is the first woman, the first Black American and the first South Asian American to become Vice President of the United States. The Presidential Inauguration, held on January 20, 2021, was a much needed breath of inspiration following a difficult year in 2020. Vice President Harris was sworn in by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina Supreme Court Justice.

Vice President Harris’ success – coined “the first, but not the last” – is a message to women and girls of all diverse backgrounds that our goals are attainable, and that we, too, can shatter the glass-ceiling.

Vice President Harris is no stranger to paving the way. She was the first woman, the first Black woman, and the first South Asian



American woman to serve as San Francisco District Attorney (2004-2011) and Attorney General of California (2011-2016). In 2016, she was elected to the U.S. Senate becoming the first Black woman to represent California, and only the second Black woman elected to the Senate.





# RESILIENCE

## CWL Hosts Its 46th Annual Dinner

BY STERLING ELMORE

For its 46th Annual Dinner on September 11, 2020, California Women Lawyers put its theme – Resilience - on full display as lawyers from across the state gathered for CWL's first ever virtual dinner. Over 150 attendees gathered to network and listen to inspirational speeches about the strength and capacity so many women lawyers have demonstrated throughout history and during what has been an impossibly challenging year for so many.

Outgoing CWL Board President Jessica Lynn Rowe reflected on her time as President during a year shaped by a global pandemic. Rowe shared how the Board met the pandemic head on, creating a robust digital presence with programming including the CWL at Home series and a successful virtual version of So You Want to Be a Judge™. Finally, Rowe shared CWL's long overdue addition of a diversity task force (now formally the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee) and its ongoing commitment to fight systemic racism by keeping diversity and inclusion at the forefront in programming, activism, and membership.

Alameda County District Attorney and former CWL President Nancy E. O'Malley introduced the 2020 recipient of the Nancy E. O'Malley Scholarship, Mariah Cooks. Each year, the scholarship is awarded to a law student committed to issues affecting women and children in the community. District Attorney O'Malley noted that Cooks embodies that commitment with a life long passion for serving underrepresented youths, particularly commercially sexually exploited children. Cooks graciously thanked CWL for the award and credited District Attorney O'Malley with directing her towards the best way to use her law degree in the fight against

human trafficking, advice she is now following as a Deputy District Attorney in Alameda County.

Jennifer L. Keller, at Partner at Keller/Anderlee LLP, introduced this year's inspiring Judith Solely Lawyer as Citizen Award recipient, Laura Brill. Brill is a named partner at Kendall Brill & Kelly and the founder of The Civics Center, a non-profit devoted to civic youth engagement and voter participation in high schools (<https://thecivicscenter.org>).



Brill spoke movingly about hope and using our problem solving skills to organize and change our communities for the better. She shared how she founded The Civics Center when she found herself worried about hatred, racism, and threats to democracy following the 2016 election. After finding out that California and fourteen other states allow teens to pre-register to vote, she was concerned that these laws were not being rigorously implemented. In founding The Civics Center, Brill worked to "invite young people into our democracy" by teaching them how to hold nonpartisan voter registration drives in their schools, publishing research on voter participation, and advocating for laws and policies

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# RESILIENCE



Nancy O'Malley, Alameda County DA  
Awarding Mariah Cooks  
the Nancy O'Malley Scholarship



*continued from page 25*

to improve civic engagement. Brill called on attendees to dig deep to turn their hope into a “desire and capacity to act.” She encouraged each person in attendance to take responsibility for identifying problems in the world and to create the conditions under which we can all work together to solve them.

Following Brill’s inspiring words, CWL President Elect Sabrina Ashjian introduced the evening’s keynote speaker: Congresswoman Jackie Speier, who represents California’s 14th congressional district. Congresswoman Speier focused her remarks on the theme of the evening, Resil-

ience. She noted how apt the theme was in light of the 100th anniversary of women’s right to vote in the United States, a right that was won through many overlooked acts of resilience and resistance. Congresswoman Speier called on all attendees to take action and “do the work necessary to gain the equality that all of our daughters and granddaughters deserve.” She spoke candidly about her personal resilience, including her harrowing experience being shot in Jonestown, Guyana and the sudden death of her husband 14 years later when she was pregnant with her second child. Through tragedy, Congresswoman Speier triumphed, never taking a day for granted and dedicating her life to public service. She noted how the resilience



Ameer Mikacich  
2019-20 President,  
CWL Foundation



Jessica Rowe

Jessica Rowe  
2019-20 President, CWL



Naomi Dewey  
2020-21 President, CWL



Congresswoman Jackie Speier  
Keynote Speaker



Laura W. Brill  
Judith Soley Award Recipient

of women has led to greater representation in federal office, but that there is still work to be done in the areas of equal pay, pregnancy discrimination, and so many other issues affecting women in our country. She encouraged every person in attendance to be resilient: to take risks, learn from them, and live life to the fullest.

California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye swore in the new CWL Board, including President Naomi Dewey who provided the evenings closing remarks. Dewey shared her excitement for the coming year of CWL and reflected on the many women throughout CWL's history who have broken barriers and embodied resilience. Dewey underscored the mission of CWL and

how, to truly advance women in the law, we must join together to fight the many challenges we face: systemic racism, sexism, climate change, attacks on the rule of law, and more. All of the speakers shared in their message of community and resilience, with an optimism for what CWL can accomplish in the year to come.



Sterling Elmore is the Affiliate Governor for Women Lawyers of Alameda County and serves on the CWL Scholarship and Communications committees. She is an associate at Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost in Oakland, CA where she represents public school districts in special education and student matters.

# Bias From the Bench, What Can You Do?

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**BY BETH MORA**

- Judge asks female court staff attorney, *"Can I have a hug?"*, then states, *"I'm really very fond of you"*;
- Judge states to female counsel at conclusion of hearing, *"You don't have to act like a scared little girl in my courtroom"*; and,
- Judge asks female counsel with a diverse last name where she is from, when counsel responds from a city in central California, the Judge asks if her family are farmers.

As women attorneys and litigators, we appreciate bias has an impact on our lives and cases. What does one do when they are faced with bias from the bench?

## **Commission on Judicial Performance**

An attorney can make a complaint with the Commission on Judicial Performance (CJP). The CJP is an independent state agency responsible for investigating complaints of judicial misconduct and judicial incapacity and for disciplining judges, pursuant to Article VI, Section 18 of the California Constitution. The CJP complaint procedure is located on their website.

Should a judicial officer be subjected to disciplinary action, advisory letter, private or public admonishment, public censure, or removal from office/involuntary retirement, a judge may petition the Supreme Court to review the discipline taken, other than private admonishment. There does not appear to be a process for the complaining party to appeal the closure of their complaint.

In 2019, the CJP had 1,856 judgeships within their jurisdiction and an additional 288 commissioners and referees. The CJP considered 1,241 new complaints naming

895 different judges. Of those, only a small number were actually investigated. Of said complaints, 1,129 were closed by the commission, and another 55 were closed following staff inquiries, all with no finding of wrongdoing. Within 2019, the commission publicly censured only two judges, imposed four public admonishments, issued five private admonishments and 13 advisory letters. One judge was disciplined in 2019 for engaging in bias or appearance of bias toward a particular class. Of note, only four percent of the complaints to the CJP originated from an attorney. A 10-year summary of CJP complaint activity confirms a pattern where nearly all complaints made to the commission were closed prior to investigation with no finding of wrongdoing.

2020 CJP complaint statistics have not been released, however data available confirms one public censure, four public admonishments, and one order of removal were issued in 2020. The censure and two of the admonishments involved misconduct for the appearance of bias as well as the order of removal included claims of harassment upon seven women.

Based on the forgoing, it is understandable why attorneys would be reluctant to make a complaint within the CJP or simply are not even aware of the CJP.

## Local Bias Committee

Recognizing that importance of the matter, the court established local bias committees to address bias through education and a complaint process codified in the California Rules of Court. In 1987, a Judicial Council Advisory Committee on Gender Bias in the Courts was appointed by former Chief Justice Rose Elisabeth Bird. As a founding mother of CWL, the first woman appointed as a justice of the California Supreme Court, the first woman to serve as Chief Justice of California, and Chair of the Judicial Council, it is not surprising, and truly an honor, that Chief Justice Rose Elisabeth Bird led this endeavor. The Advisory Committee was the first committee to focus on bias in the courts in California and is thought to be the first of its kind anywhere in the United States.

In 1990, the Advisory Committee submitted a comprehensive report with 68 recommendations which were adopted including the establishment of local court bias committees. As a result, the local bench/bar communities devoted time to creating bias committees. A Local Bias Committees workshop was held on October 2, 1992, which was a joint venture between the Judicial Council and the State Bar. Approximately 10 local bias committees existed at that time.

A formal report concerning local court bias committees was issued by the Judicial Council in 1996. The Standards of Judicial Administration were renumbered in California Rules of Court

(CRC), Rule 10.20 -- Court's duty to prohibit bias.

CRC 10.20 states each court "should" create a "local committee on bias", details that each court has a duty to ensure fairness in court proceedings, to refrain from engaging in bias and ensure unbiased decisions. CRC 10.20(a), (b)(1). The Rule identifies twelve specific processes for handling complaint procedures, within the required established local bias committee. CRC(c). Each local committee, and its purpose and "features of the informal complaint process should be memorialized in the local rules of court." CRC(d).

As of April 2020, review of the present local rules and the proposed rules effective July 1, 2020, there were only a small handful of the 58 Superior Courts in compliance with CRC 10.20. Further, 31 Superior Courts had no reference to bias in their local rules of court.

The Committee on Bias in the Judiciary for the California Employment Lawyers Association (CELA) actively engaged in public discussions over the last year to bring the dormant CRC 10.20 Rule to the forefront. We began to speak out about what we saw, shedding light on the existence of bias in the courts, including the broken complaint structure, as discussed in several articles.

In August 2020, CWL hosted an informative and inspiring event honoring U.S. Magistrate Judge Louise LaMothe presented by Administrative Presiding Justice Judith McConnell of the 4<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeal. The two women spoke about their experiences in the 1990's working on the Chief Justice's Advisory Committee on Gender Bias in the Courts and specifically concerning the creation of local committees on bias.

Public attention caused movement as multiple Superior Courts took steps to launch new committees, including in San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Alameda. Other counties made efforts to update their Local Rules including in San Diego and Contra Costa County. Further, on November 5, 2020, the California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) issued a formal ethics opinion about the duties of a presiding judge or other judge with supervisory duties when investigating a complaint filed against a trial judge.

## Chief Justice's Work Group to Address Bias in Court Proceedings

On November 4, 2020, Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye announced a new work group to address bias in court proceedings, entitled Work Group to Enhance Administrative Standards Addressing Bias in Court Proceedings (Work Group). The Work Group is tasked with updating the protected classifications listed in CRC 10.20, considering the optimal role and composition of the local bias committees, and other changes to

better assist courts in maintain a courtroom environment free of bias and the appearance of bias.

Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye appointed eight persons to said Work Group five judges and two attorneys. It appears before the Work Group makes their final recommendations, there will be a period, however an estimated date for when this will occur has not been announced. The work anticipates they will make final recommendations to the Chief Justice and the Judicial Counsel in the fall of 2021.

## What Can You Do?

Review your local rules of court for a bias committee in accordance with CRC 10.20, if it does not exist in your local rules, help make sure it does (you are welcome to contact the author for assistance if you have questions); and,

Access the [Work Group](#) webpage, be informed and stay informed on the status of the Work Group, and provide comments during the public comment period.

As attorneys and as women, we are aware of the realities of bias in the courtroom, and demand a courtroom and proceeding free of bias, a fair procedure in which to present a complaint should bias occur, and a transparent evaluation of the complaint process.

We are seeking more than a seat at the table; we are seeking to help create the table where we sit – on a state and local level. Join me, my friends, in demanding better for ourselves, for our sisters-in-the-law, for our future.

## References

1 Examples from the few judicial discipline orders issued over the last several years. See Decision and Order Removing Justice Jeffrey W. Johnson from Office, June 2, 2020, California Supreme Court denied writ of review on February 2, 2021, a 111-page decision and order found that Justice Johnson repeatedly victimized women including a Justice, staff of the court and attorneys in the form of inappropriate sexual remarks and unwanted touches; See Decision and Order Imposing Public Censure Pursuant to Stipulation re: Judge Jeffrey G. Bennet, March 25, 2020, on March 2, 2020 the CJP filed a Notice of Formal Proceedings against Judge Bennett, by March 18, 2020, a stipulation was approved by the Commission ending the proceedings, which confirmed 28 counts including bias based on conduct due to race towards a defendant and multiple sexualized comments to female attorneys; and, See Decision and Order Removing Judge John T. Laettner From Office, November 6, 2019, California Supreme Court denied writ of review on June 10, 2020,

Commission determined Judge Laettner committed gender bias and inappropriate comments to and about women including a pattern of sexual harassment and sexual discrimination towards attorneys and females in court.

2 Filing a Complaint, [http://cjp.ca.gov/file\\_a\\_complaint/](http://cjp.ca.gov/file_a_complaint/)

3 2019 Case Statistics, [http://cjp.ca.gov/case\\_statistics/](http://cjp.ca.gov/case_statistics/)

4 State of California Commission on Judicial Performance, Summary of Discipline Statistics, 1990-1999, [http://cjp.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Statistical\\_study\\_1990-1990.pdf](http://cjp.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/Statistical_study_1990-1990.pdf)

5 CJP Pending Cases, [http://cjp.ca.gov/pending\\_case/](http://cjp.ca.gov/pending_case/)

6 Justice Bird created said Advisory Committee after she had suffered the sorrow of defeat when the electorate voted her out of judicial office in November 1986. As she departed, Justice Bird continued in her efforts to break barriers against gender bias in the courts. The importance of Justice Bird's efforts cannot be understated; and is one of the many reasons we at CWL give an annual award in her honor.

7 A review was independently conducted by Beth W. Mora, Esq.

8 Beth W. Mora, Esq., is co-chair of the CELA Committee on Elimination of Bias in the Judiciary. See 22 Counties Not Complying With Bias Committee Recommendation, Daily Journal, by Jessica Mach, July 6, 2020 – 22 Courts confirming they did not have bias committees and 30 Courts not responding to request for information; and, Bias Committees Are Enigmas, Attorneys Say, Daily Journal, by Jessica Mach, August 3, 2020.

9 Court Leaders Developing Judicial Guidelines, Daily Journal, by Jessica Mach, September 1, 2020.

10 See CJEO Formal Opinion 2020-015 <https://www.judicial-ethicsopinions.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/CJEO-Formal-Opinion-2020-015.pdf>

11 Press Release, California Chief Justice Appoints New Work Group to Address Bias in Court Proceedings, November 4, 2020 at <https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/news/california-chief-justice-appoints-new-work-group-address-bias-court-proceedings>

12 See website launched on January 19, 2021 <http://www.courts.ca.gov/biasworkgroup.htm>



Beth W. Mora, Esq., Mora Employment Law, serves on the CWL Board of Governors as First Vice President and as a District 3 Governor. She is a co-chair of the CWL Gender-Equity Task Force, and also serves as the co-chair of the Committee on Bias in the Judiciary for the California Employment Lawyers Association. Beth can be contacted with questions at [bmora@moraelaw.com](mailto:bmora@moraelaw.com).



# NANCY E. O'MALLEY SCHOLARSHIP

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**The CWL Foundation** is now accepting applications for the 2021 Nancy E. O'Malley Scholarship. The scholarship was founded in 2016 to honor CWL Past President Nancy O'Malley (2009-2010) for her dedication and commitment to promoting California Women Lawyers and protecting all women and children in our society. The scholarship is awarded annually to a law student whose prior and current activities, and future plans demonstrate a commitment to issues affecting women and/or children in the community. Everyone who meets the requirements may apply. The scholarship amount is \$5,000 (one awarded).

The online application is available [here](#), and the deadline is April 12, 2021 at 5:00 pm PST.

## The eligibility requirements and application details are below:

To be eligible, students must meet the following requirements:

- Current membership in CWL
- Be currently enrolled in a law school accredited by the Committee of Bar Examiners of the State of California;
- Be in the top fifty percent of their law school class currently;
- Demonstrate financial need; and
- Demonstrate a commitment to issues affecting women and/or children in the community.

To apply, please submit the following materials:

- A Personal statement addressing your commitment to issues affecting women and/or children. Be sure to address how your commitment will continue after law school graduation.
- Current resume listing at least two references;
- Completed online application;
- Certified law school transcript;
- Letter of good standing from current law school; and
- Minimum of one letter of recommendation (maximum of three letters). At least one letter of recommendation must be from someone with personal knowledge of the applicant's dedication to issues affecting women and/or children in the community.

Questions may be addressed to [texcinia@cw.org](mailto:texcinia@cw.org) with "Foundation Scholarship" in the subject line.

To be considered for a Scholarship this year, all application materials must be submitted electronically by April 12, 2021.





# Meet the 2020 Nancy E. O'Malley Scholarship Recipient Mariah Cooks

BY STERLING ELMORE

California Women Lawyers is proud to present the 2020 Nancy E. O'Malley Scholarship to Golden Gate University School of Law graduate Mariah Cooks.

Cooks grew up in the Central Coast of California. For much of her childhood, her parents operated a group home for teenage girls on probation or involved with the Child Welfare System. For Cooks, these girls became like sisters and she was able to witness what she recognized in her adult years as her parents' true commitment to supporting and uplifting often forgotten youths who may otherwise slip through the cracks.

From an early age, Cooks knew that she wanted to play Division I basketball and practice law. As a dedicated athlete, Cooks achieved her dreams, receiving a full athletic scholarship at Washington State University. Cooks made history by becoming one of Washington State's youngest elected team captains, all while earning her degree with a major in political science and minors in criminal justice and comparative ethnic studies.

After graduating from Washington State, Cooks returned to the Central Coast to work as a Case Manager and then a Treatment Specialist in her parents' group home. It was that experience, coupled with her reflection on growing up with the girls of the youth home, that instilled in Cooks a passion for advocating for underrepresented and underserved populations, particularly commercially sexually exploited youth.

With this calling in mind, Cooks enrolled in Golden Gate University School of Law (GGU) to pursue her law degree and join the anti-trafficking community in the Bay Area, one of the largest sex trafficking hubs in the United States. During law school, Cooks served as a Judicial Extern with the Judicial Intern Opportunity Program (JIOP) for the Honorable Susan Breall in the Dependency Court of the San Francisco Superior Court and a summer law clerk in the Alameda County District Attorney's office. Cooks was elected co-President of the GGU Black Law Student Association and also worked as an advocate in the Bay Area Women Against Rape's Sexually



Exploited Minors Program. Cooks graduated in May 2020 and passed the bar in December 2020.

Cooks is a Deputy District Attorney for the Alameda County District Attorney's Office. She is grateful for everything she is learning from her colleagues and supervisors. Her background and understanding of the juvenile system is greatly informing her ability to be thoughtful and impactful in her current assignment in the Juvenile Department. Outside of her legal work, Cooks combines her dual passions of basketball and mentoring youths as an AAU Girls basketball coach for West Coast United, coaching the 15U Team and helping with player development for the 16U and 17U teams.



The CWL Foundation is a 501(c)(3) that educates lawyers and the general public regarding women in the legal profession and legal issues pertaining to women. The CWL Foundation annually awards the Nancy E. O'Malley Scholarship to deserving law student to help meet the educational and financial needs of those who share CWL's goals and ideals. The current deadline to apply for the scholarship is April 12, 2021.

You can support the important work of the CWL Foundation, including the Nancy E. O'Malley Scholarship, through a monetary donation. Donations are tax-deductible, where permitted by law. Checks can be made payable to "CWL Foundation" and sent to: California Women Lawyers, 2520 Venture Oaks Drive, Suite 150, Sacramento, CA 95833 or you can donate online at <https://cwl.memberclicks.net/donate>.



Sterling Elmore is the Affiliate Governor for Women Lawyers of Alameda County and serves on the CWL Scholarship and Communications committees. She is an associate at Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost in Oakland, CA where she represents public school districts in special education and student matters.



## CWL Celebrates Galentine's Day

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California Women Lawyers hosted our first Past President and CWL Life Member event this past February, sponsored by Hartman King PC. The virtual mixer brought together women who have sustained and lead this organization since its inception 46 years ago. Former Congresswoman Lynn Schenk and civil rights advocate Dru Ramey shared about the early days of CWL. Past presidents and CWL life members enjoyed the evening networking and catching up. This event marks what CWL hopes will be a new series of exclusive opportunities for life members.



To become a life member or to learn more, visit <https://cwl.memberclicks.net/membership> or contact CWL at [info@cwl.org](mailto:info@cwl.org) or 916.930.9020. Consider becoming a CWL life member today and join the long list of prestigious members!

# CWL LIFE MEMBERS

Adrienne Grover	Deborah Talmage	Joan Ortolano	Patrick Madden
Ahtossa Fullerton	Denae Budde	Jo-Ann Grace	Paula Star
Alan Friedenthal	Diana Van Cleve	Joanne Parrilli	Pauline Farmer-Koppenol
Alice Sullivan	Diana Wheatley (ret.)	Joseph Cotchett	Pauline Weaver
Allan Goodman	Diane Yu	Joyce Kennard	Pearl Mann
Amy Anderson	Dominique Shelton	Karen Goodman	Randa Trapp
Andrea Carlise	Dorothy Washington	Karen Kaplowitz	Reba Birmingham
Angela Bradstreet	Drucilla Ramey	Kathryn Stahnke	Rebecca Gunn
Angela Davis	Eileen Decker	Laura Scott	Rebecca Prater
Anita DeFrantz	Elizabeth Cabraser	Linda Nelson	Renee Campbell
Anne Marie Murphy	Elizabeth Scott-Graham	Lindy Barocchi	Rosalyn Zakheim
Anne McGowan	Ellen Pansky	Lisa Brandon	Ruth Glick
Anne Ronan	Erin Childs	Louise LaMothe	Ruth Ratzlaff
Ara Jabaghourian	Ernestine Forrest	Lynn Schenk	Sally Noma
Ashley-Farrand Margalo	Eugene Hyman	Lynne Lasry	Samantha Grant
Audrey Loftin	Eulanda Matthews	Lynne Yates-Carter	Sandra Carter
Barbara Bryant	Frances Christiansen	Malissa Hathaway McKeith	Sandra Springs
Barbara Jones	Frank Pitre	Marian Johnston	Sharon Hartmann
Barbara Kuehn	Gillian Ross	Marjorie Carter	Sharon Mason
Belinda Siith	Glenda Sanders	Marjorie Randolph	Sheila Pokras (Ret.)
Belynda Reck	Harriette Treloar	Mary Cranston	Sherry Smith
Blanche Bersch	Hilary Cohen	Mary Hackenbracht	Shirley Henderson
Brenda Harbin-Forte	Hon. Althea Baker	Mary Levinger	Stephanie Atigh
Brenda Logan	Hon. Audrey Collins	Michele Miller	Sue Alexander
Brian Lamb	Hon. Bobbi Tillmon	Mika Hilaire	Sydney Minnerly
Candace Carroll	Hon. Carol Codrington	Nanci Nishimura	Tami Buscho
Carla Pittman	Hon. Elena Duarte	Nancy Fineman	Tina Rasnow
Catherine Gallagher	Hon. Marguerite Downing	Nancy Gee	Toni Rembe
Catherine Sprinkles	Hon. Sandra Thompson	Nancy Zamora	Tracy Hughes
Cathy Bencivengo	Howard Watkins	Nedra Austin	Trena Burger-Plavan
Charity Kenyon	Isabel Cohen	Niall McCarthy	Vivian Kral
Charlene Usher	Jacqueline Harding	Niki Okcu	Wendy Dier
Charlotte Woolard	Jacqueline Yates	Pamela Chin	Wilma Pinder
Dawn Schock	Janice Kamenir-Reznik	Patricia Shiu	
Deanna Myhre	Jessica Rowe	Patricia Titus	
Deborah Chase	Jill Robbins		

# CWL Upcoming Events

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- April 20      **Stand Up, Stand Out: Best Practices for Your Next Remote Court Appearance**  
Presented by Alicia Aquino, President and Trial Technology Consultant of Aquino Trial Services  
*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*
- April 29      **Stress Management Through Movement, A Physical Therapist's Perspective**  
Presented by Dr. Ada Wells, PT and Dr. Diedra Manns, PT  
*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*
- May 3      **Coffee and Connect**  
*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*
- May 5      **Wine Down Wednesday**  
*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*
- May 20      **In Conversation With**  
Brenda Star Adams, Esq., the CWL 2021 Fay Stender Award recipient, with CWL immediate past president, Jessica Rowe  
*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*
- May 22      **CWL Board Meeting**  
*Virtual*



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June 2

**Coffee and Connect**

*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*

June 7

**Coffee and Connect**

*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*

June 17

**In Conversation With**

Honorable Judge Joan P. Weber, the CWL 2021 Joan Dempsey Klein Award recipient, with Ninth Circuit Judge Margaret McKeown

*A CWL at Home Virtual Program*

Summer, tba

**So You Want To Be A Judge?™**

September 10

**Annual Dinner**

*Virtual*

# BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER



**CALIFORNIA  
WOMEN LAWYERS**

*Join Now*

## CWL

was chartered in 1974 and is the only statewide organization dedicated to lifting up women in the law and in society. CWL's mission is "to advance women in the profession of law; to improve the administration of justice; to better the position of women in society; to eliminate all inequities based on gender and to provide an organization for collective action and expression germane to the aforesaid purposes."

### BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP



#### ONE-OF-A KIND PROGRAMMING

**So You Want To Be A Judge:** An insider guide demystifying – and preparing you for – the judicial application process.

**Elect To Run:** Encourages women to run for public office and provides tips on what it takes to run.

**CWL At Home:** Online series bringing resources, community and connection with opportunities for complimentary MCLE credits.



#### THE CWL NETWORK

CWL's membership includes lawyers, judges, in-house counsel, professors and law students, providing mentorship on a statewide basis. CWL provides various networking and speaker opportunities.



#### THE IN-HOUSE COUNSEL NETWORK

In-house lawyers from across the state and industries may connect through exclusive events, listserv, and programs designed specifically for women in house-counsel.



#### LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN

Your membership supports CWL's state and national efforts to further legislation that makes life better for women.



#### AMICUS ACTIVITY

CWL prepares or joins in amicus briefs at the appellate level on matters relevant to CWL's core issues, including equal justice.



#### DIVERSITY ON THE BENCH

CWL works closely with the Governor's office to promote diversity in the judiciary, and endorses judges nationwide.



#### LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

CWL has leadership opportunities available to enhance your network. Members are encouraged to join one of CWL's committees.



#### A NATIONAL VOICE

CWL is a conduit to national organizations, affiliates and sister bar organizations throughout the country.

**\$175**

**REGULAR/SUPPORTING  
MEMBERSHIP (ANNUAL)**

**\$95**

**DISCOUNTED ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP**

Judges

Government Employees

Public Interest | Non-Profit Lawyers

In-House Counsel

#### *Members of the following Affiliates:*

Black Women Lawyers Associates of Los Angeles

Contra Costa County Bar Association- Women's Section

Fresno County Women Lawyers Association

Lawyers Club of San Diego

Long Beach Women Lawyers

Marin County Women Lawyers

Orange County Women Lawyers

San Mateo Women Lawyers

Santa Barbara Women Lawyers

Santa Clara County Bar Association

Women Lawyers of Alameda County

Women Lawyers of Los Angeles

Women Lawyers of Sacramento

Women Lawyers of Ventura County

**\$2,500**

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP**

**\$0**

**LAW STUDENT | NEWLY ADMITTED (1<sup>st</sup> year)**

[Click Here To Join](#)

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# ADVERTISE IN THE CWL NEWSLETTER!

Each digital issue of the California Women Lawyer's newsletter is shared with over 4,000 people across the U.S. This digital publication connects industry experts to relative legislation news, valuable events for networking and professional development as well as opinion editorials from CWL leaders and members. Space is limited, ad space is determined first come, first serve. All ads subject to approval by CWL.



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CALIFORNIA WOMEN LAWYERS  
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