

2014-2019

STRATEGIC PLAN



United States Bankruptcy Court
Central District of California

Acknowledgement

The Strategic Plan of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California was crafted by a Strategic Planning Committee appointed by the chief bankruptcy judge and composed of executive management, staff, and judges representing the core of the court's judicial committees. The Strategic Planning Committee identified fundamental long-term issues facing the court and formulated goals and strategies to address these issues. Implementation of the plan will be the responsibility of the court's judicial committees with direction from the court's Executive Committee and assistance from the Clerk of Court and staff.

Strategic Planning Committee

Peter H. Carroll, chair, Chief Bankruptcy Judge (Executive Committee)

Sheri Bluebond, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge (Executive Committee; Case Management Committee)

Scott C. Clarkson, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge (IT Committee)

Sandra R. Klein, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge (Rules Committee; Community Outreach Committee)

Deborah J. Saltzman, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge (IT Committee; Education Committee; Community Outreach Committee; *Pro Se* Committee)

Maureen A. Tighe, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge (Executive Committee; *Pro Se* Committee; Case Management Committee; Community Outreach Committee)

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The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California would like to thank the judicial officers, staff, attorneys, and members of the public for their contributions to the development of this strategic plan.



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“Concepts of justice must have hands and feet . . . to carry out justice in every case in the shortest possible time and the lowest possible cost. This is the challenge to every lawyer and judge in America.”

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger [Speech to the American Bar Association, October 1, 1972]

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUDGE

On behalf of my colleagues, it is my pleasure to present the Strategic Plan of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California for 2014–2019.

Our court is the largest and busiest bankruptcy court in the nation. We have five divisions -- Los Angeles, Riverside, Santa Ana, San Fernando Valley, and the Northern Division. Within our borders is some of the most beautiful geography in the world. Our 24 active judges and two recalled judges supported by dedicated clerk's office and judicial staff serve a population of approximately 18.5 million people representing nearly 50% of the state's population. At least 24 languages are spoken in the Central District which covers seven counties, encompasses over 40,000 square miles, and includes four of the five most populous counties in the state (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino). For the 12-month period ending September 30, 2012, we led the nation with 111,909 filings. The Central District also leads the nation in both the number and percentage of *pro se* (self-represented) debtors. Our *pro se* rate is 28.3%, over three times the national average of 8.8%.



This Strategic Plan, which was approved by the Board of Judges on September 6, 2013, is the product of an inclusive planning process in which judges, executive management, staff, attorneys, and others came together during the past 18 months to craft a vision for the future of our court. By including photographs of people and places in each of the five divisions served by the court, we sought to craft a strategic plan that both shared our pride in the district and defined our vision of the future with those we serve - north to Morro Bay, east to the Joshua Trees, south to Bommer Canyon in Irvine, and west to the Pacific Ocean.

We are proud of the technological advances we have made, and we have bold plans to implement new technologies in the future to improve access to justice and make the court more transparent and efficient. Though we face difficult economic times ahead, we remain committed to providing excellent service, efficient operations, and effective use of judicial resources. This Strategic Plan is composed of mission and vision statements, five strategic issues, 18 goals, and 69 strategies. It will assist the court in meeting challenges, seizing opportunities, building on its strengths, and measuring success. It will direct the commitment of our resources during the next five years and produce a more efficient, effective court providing the highest quality of justice to residents of the Central District of California. It is our blueprint for the future.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'P' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Honorable Peter H. Carroll
Chief Judge

MESSAGE FROM THE CLERK OF COURT

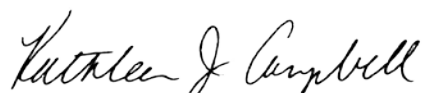
Serving with pride as the Clerk of Court for the largest bankruptcy court in the nation, I am pleased to present the court's Strategic Plan for 2014-2019. The Strategic Plan will guide the court in its mission to serve the most populous and diverse judicial district in the country by providing bankruptcy relief, fair and impartial justice, and a prompt and efficient resolution of disputes. Under the leadership of Chief Judge Peter H. Carroll, the court engaged in an 18-month outreach effort involving judges, court staff, the Bar, other agencies, and the public to develop a living document to meet the evolving challenges of a new era. The result is a Strategic Plan that builds upon the court's past successes, focuses attention where work remains to be done, recognizes emerging trends, and incorporates the views and ideas of those who serve and do business with the court.



The Clerk's Office, in partnership with the court's 24 active judges, recalled judges, and chambers staff, is dedicated to the court's vision to provide the highest quality of justice and service to the public. Of prime importance is our commitment to adhere to strict ethical standards and treat the public with dignity and respect. The Clerk's Office strives to deliver excellent customer service responsive to the needs of the Central District's diverse community and seeks to increase trust and confidence in the judicial system through the prudent management of public funds. Given the difficult economic times facing the Federal Judiciary, defining the key issues we face and effective strategies to address them is now more critical than ever as we focus on increasing the court's efficiency and conserving its very limited resources.

The Strategic Plan affirms the importance of five fundamental issues upon which the court will focus to achieve specific and measurable results: administration of justice; access to justice and service to the public; the judiciary workforce of the future; a solid infrastructure; and public understanding, trust, and confidence. Specific goals and strategies to address these issues are outlined in the Strategic Plan, including accelerating the adoption of advanced technology to increase efficiency and access to justice, and instituting innovative case management measures that promote informed judicial decision-making. To hold ourselves accountable for the results that our stakeholders have the right to expect, the Clerk's Office has developed a companion Action Plan that will be used to measure the court's progress and report our Strategic Plan accomplishments each year.

I want to thank all who so generously participated in the development of our Strategic Plan. On behalf of the talented and outstanding employees in the Clerk's Office, I pledge our unwavering commitment to achieving the mission of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Central District of California, as we move forward together to meet the challenges ahead.


Kathleen J. Campbell
Clerk of Court

OUR MISSION

To serve the most populous and diverse judicial district in the country by providing bankruptcy relief, fair and impartial justice, and a prompt and efficient resolution of disputes.

OUR VISION

The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California will provide the highest quality of justice and service to the public by:

- Maintaining a safe, professional environment
- Adhering to high standards of conduct and professional development
- Treating the public with dignity and respect
- Being accessible, convenient, understandable, and responsive to the needs of the district's diverse community
- Allocating and managing resources efficiently and effectively
- Using advanced technology to support the court, enhance access to justice, and serve those who access the court
- Educating the public about the role and function of the court and the services provided



"Next to doing right, the great object in the administration of justice should be to give public satisfaction."

John Jay, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court

Photo: The Mission Inn

Summary of the Plan

This plan defines a strategic direction for the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California over the next five years. Identified in the plan are five fundamental issues on which the court will focus to achieve specific and measurable results:

Issue 1: Administration of Justice

Issue 2: Access to Justice and Service to the Public

Issue 3: Judiciary Workforce of the Future

Issue 4: A Solid Infrastructure

Issue 5: Public Understanding, Trust, and Confidence

The goals and strategies developed in response to these issues are designed to position the court for success in its mission to provide bankruptcy relief, fair and impartial justice, and a prompt and efficient resolution of disputes.

Issue 1. - Administration of Justice

How can the court provide justice effectively and efficiently given changing demands and resources?

Issue Description. Justice requires that cases be processed efficiently, and disputes resolved timely, fairly, and impartially. But the administration of justice is challenged by uncertainty in the number of case filings. Case filings increased dramatically with the economic downturn, just as resources available to the judiciary were reduced. Case filings are now decreasing, but it is unknown how long that decrease will last. Regardless of the caseload, funding will continue to be limited in the future. A shrinking budget requires the court to review and streamline operations and policies to ensure that public resources are used in the administration of justice efficiently, effectively, and accountably.



*“Our mission is at once the oldest and most basic of this country:
to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man.”*

Lyndon Baines Johnson

Photo: Temecula Vineyards



GOAL 1.1:

Administer justice fairly and impartially without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, economic status, or disability.

Strategies:

- Confirm that court procedures conform to relevant statutes, rules, and policies.
- Promote the education of judges and court personnel on issues of diversity.
- Foster diversity in the court's workforce by maximizing efforts to attract and retain employees of differing backgrounds, foreign language capabilities, and experiences.
- Make sure that the court's community outreach efforts include all of the district's diverse community.
- Clarify and inform practitioners of the unique procedural requirements of each judge while striving to limit variances and increase uniformity in judicial practices within the district.



“Justice too long delayed is justice denied.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Photo: Joshua Tree National Park

GOAL 1.2

Structure court operations in a manner that best facilitates the expeditious, economical, and fair resolution of disputes.

Strategies:

- Build and maintain an effective executive management structure that guarantees the court's ability to achieve its mission, vision, and strategic goals.
- Standardize operations to provide a uniform system of justice and consistent quality of service.
- Institute case management plans that utilize best practice and time standards to expedite case processing appropriate to the type and complexity of the case.

"[N]othing contributes more to the public's esteem and respect for government than the effective administration of justice."

Alexander Hamilton

Photo: Downtown Los Angeles

GOAL 1.3:

Administer the court according to sound management practices, and seek ways to create efficiencies through streamlining processes and implementing new technology.

Strategies:

- Implement “vertical” sharing of administrative services consistent with 28 U.S.C. §§ 154(b) & 156(d), provided that shared administrative services result in measurable savings to the court and no degradation in the quality and timeliness of service to the judiciary and the public.
- Identify and market opportunities for sharing administrative services with other court units nationwide on a cost reimbursable basis in core business areas including Human Capital, Information Technology, and Space Planning.
- Participate in national committees and programs to develop court technology and implement best practices.
- Continue to review policies and procedures to improve service delivery, and to develop reports to assist decision-making.
- Educate judges and court personnel on existing and emerging technologies.

Photo: Ronald Reagan Library

GOAL 1.4:

Ensure informed judicial decision-making.

Strategies:


- Provide accurate, timely, and complete procedures and rules to judges, court personnel, and other court participants.
- Make certain that court proceedings are recorded accurately and completely, and that high quality transcripts are produced timely.
- Promptly implement changes in law and procedure.

GOAL 1.5:

Continue to assess emerging trends and changing needs of individuals, families, and businesses within the district.

Strategies:

- Identify issues, conditions, and trends likely to have a significant impact on the court.
- Develop procedures to meet changing conditions.



“True peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice.”

Jane Addams

Photo: Rodeo Drive

"All citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful."

John Marshall Harlan, Dissenting opinion, Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 559 (1896).



Photo: Manhattan Beach Pier



Photo: Big Bear Lake

GOAL 1.6:

Seek the resources necessary to maintain effective and efficient operations, and manage and expend such resources judiciously.

Strategies:

- Timely assess future resource needs necessary to accomplish the court's mission.
- Produce comprehensive budget submissions to support resource requests necessary to achieve the court's mission, goals, and strategies.
- Identify and pursue grant funding opportunities.
- Establish performance criteria and measurement systems that link budgetary resources to strategic goals.

Issue 2. - Access to Justice and Service to the Public

How can the court ensure that justice remains accessible to everyone it serves given the cost of legal representation and the shifting demographics and socioeconomic changes in the district?

Issue Description. Justice must be equally accessible to all who are served by the court. Cultural and economic differences, linguistic difficulties, and disabilities can serve as barriers to justice. Justice may also be impaired by court rules, processes, and procedures that are difficult, time-consuming, expensive, or unnecessary. The court must identify and eliminate barriers to access, help judges and court staff reduce barriers facing court users, and provide information and services to facilitate accessibility.

GOAL 2.1:

All persons will have effective access to justice, including the opportunity to resolve disputes without undue hardship, cost, inconvenience, or delay.

Strategies:

- Support and encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution methods.
- Increase the use and availability of videoconferencing to enhance access to the court.
- Develop simplified procedures to encourage electronic filing by self-represented parties.
- Establish and maintain a project in each of the district's five divisions designed to provide free legal assistance to self-represented parties.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships with educational institutions to increase access to justice by underserved populations.

GOAL 2.2:

Provide the public with information that is easily understandable and readily available.

Strategies:

- Improve and expand services, assistance, and information to self-represented parties.
- Continue to develop a variety of informational materials, such as brochures and checklists, for debtors and other court users.
- Maintain court forms and informational materials in plain, understandable language.
- Expand the availability to the public of automated court information and data through internet technologies and the court's website.

GOAL 2.3:

Make certain that court rules, procedures, and processes are free of unnecessary barriers to access.

Strategies:

- Identify and revise court rules, procedures, and processes that are unreasonable barriers to access.
- Develop mechanisms to improve proceedings involving non-English-speaking persons and others with communication or language challenges, including the expanded use of interpreter/translator services.
- Provide periodic training to judges and court staff on issues of fairness and diversity to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Issue 3. - Judiciary Workforce of the Future

How can the court attract and retain a diverse and highly skilled team of judges and court personnel who are committed to public service given increasing fiscal challenges and changing career expectations?

Issue Description. The effective administration of justice requires professional excellence and commitment to public service. The court must compete with the private sector to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce. Attracting and retaining capable judges, executives, managers, and staff will require fair and competitive compensation, opportunities for advancement and development, recognition of advanced and specialized education and training, and satisfying and motivating working conditions. To maintain public trust and confidence, our workforce must also reflect the diversity of the communities served by the court.



Photo: Court Staff

GOAL 3.1:

Employ a highly-skilled and well-trained workforce.

Strategies:

- Recruit personnel who possess the education, skills, and experience to provide effective services.
- Attract and retain personnel of varying experiences and backgrounds to promote diversity.
- Support the professional development of judges and court personnel to improve their service to the court and the public.

- Examine workforce demographics, assess future human capital needs, and formulate a workforce succession plan.
- Provide outreach and information to potential judicial applicants to encourage highly qualified individuals to apply for future judicial openings.
- Encourage judges to use existing programs that enable the bankruptcy bar to provide feedback to judges utilizing standardized evaluation tools.

GOAL 3.2:

Maintain a positive work environment that fosters high achievement, satisfaction, and employee engagement among judges and court personnel.

Strategies:

- Implement programs, policies, and initiatives to enhance employee performance, satisfaction, and retention.
- Develop an organizational culture that increases the joint involvement of judges and court personnel in court planning and operations, and facilitates increased communications between judges and court personnel.

GOAL 3.3:

Promote high standards of conduct and personal behavior among participants.

Strategies:

- Enforce adherence to codes of professional conduct, ethical practice standards, and civility standards for judges, court personnel, and members of the bar.
- Require appropriate and respectful conduct, dress, and behavior by judges, court personnel, and those appearing in court.

Photo: Vasquez Rocks

Issue 4. - A Solid Infrastructure

How can the court develop a sound infrastructure to achieve administrative efficiencies, provide a safe and secure environment, and enhance the public's access to court information and services?

Issue Description. To fulfill its mission, the court must maintain a sound infrastructure that meets the needs of the public and guarantees business continuity – now and in the future. Court facilities must be safe and functional and must engender respect for the independence and importance of the judicial branch. Division-wide management, accounting and human resource systems, and the continued implementation of new technology are essential to achieving administrative efficiencies and improving public access to court information and services.

GOAL 4.1:

Court facilities must be safe and accessible.

Strategies:

- Make certain that court facilities are accessible to all persons, particularly those with disabilities.
- Identify and address needed safety improvements.



Photo: Morro Bay

GOAL 4.2:

Create a master plan for the development of court facilities to meet the needs of the future.

Strategies:

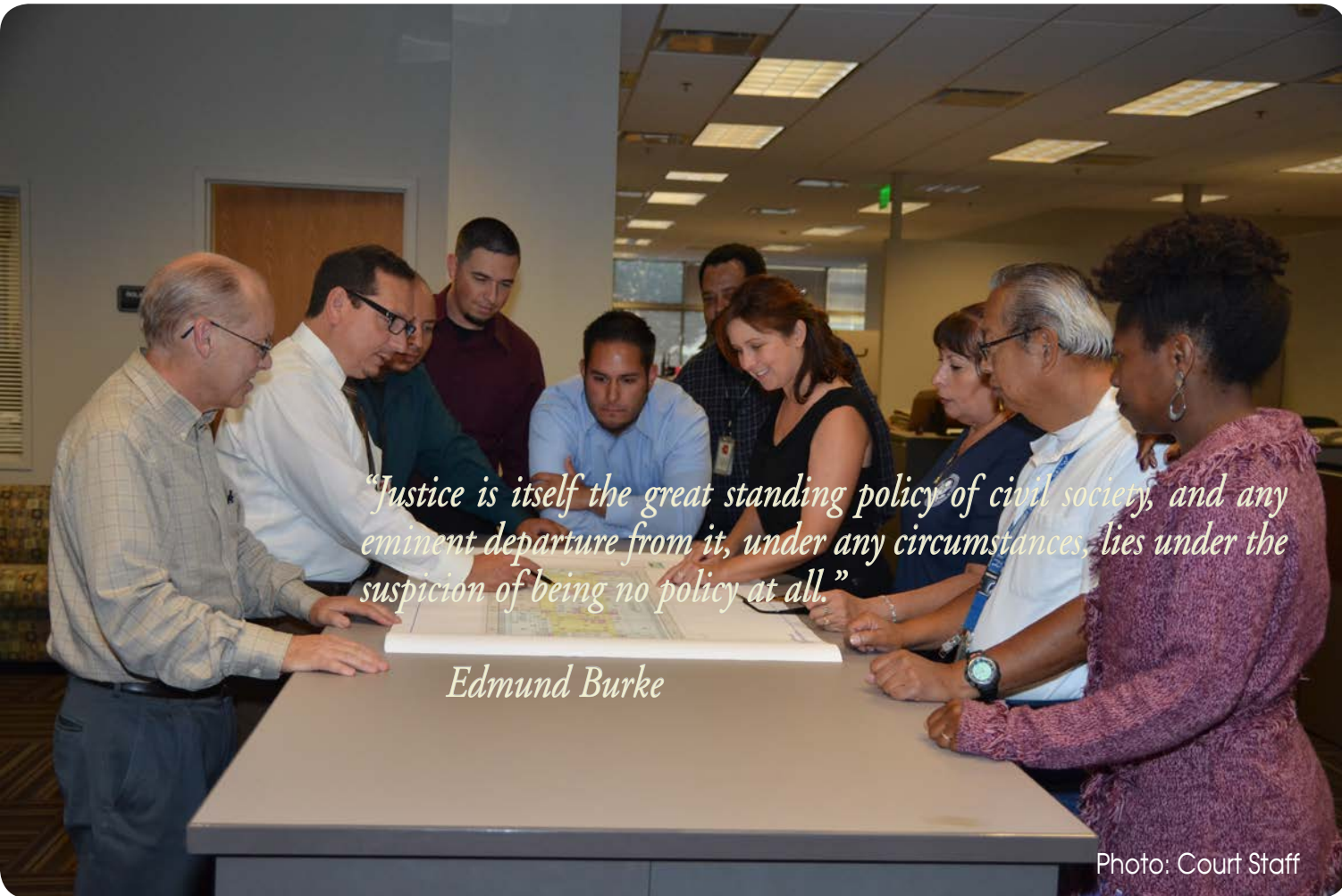
- Review the utilization of existing space to optimize cost effectiveness.
- Analyze the need for additional chambers and courtrooms for future judgeships.
- Evaluate the need for space for expanded video hearings.
- Work with the district's other court units to devise and implement a district-wide plan for space and facilities.

GOAL 4.3:

Establish a technology infrastructure by assessing the court's evolving information and courtroom technology needs, and maintaining a strategic plan to address those needs.

Strategies:

- Remodel or construct at least one courtroom as a high technology courtroom.
- Maintain up-to-date internal and external websites.
- Ensure the court has adequate skilled technology staff to support court operations.
- Investigate and implement technologies and strategies to reduce costs, eliminate waste, maximize efficiency, minimize environmental impact, and protect the privacy of litigants and employees.
- Continually evaluate and update the court's information technology strategic plan.



GOAL 4.4:

Protect people, processes, technology, and facilities to ensure employee and public safety as well as continuity of operations in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Strategies:

- Review and periodically re-evaluate the court's security and emergency procedures.
- Conduct systematic training on security and emergency procedures.
- Review and update the court's Continuity of Operations Plan ("COOP").
- Confirm that the court's COOP is communicated to, and coordinated with, other court units and appropriate public safety agencies.

Issue 5. - Public Understanding, Trust, and Confidence

How can the court increase public understanding, trust, and confidence in the judicial system?

Issue Description. The judiciary strives to earn trust and confidence by resolving disputes fairly and impartially, adhering to strict ethical standards, treating litigants with respect, and being accountable for its performance and use of public funds. The court must continue to increase the public's basic understanding of the court and the judicial system through community outreach and advances in communication technology.

GOAL 5.1:

The court must increase its community outreach.

Strategies:

- Establish an Office of Public Communications and designate an Officer of Public Communications.
- Through the court's Community Outreach Committee, identify opportunities and craft seminars, outreach programs, and publications to educate the public on the role of the courts and the importance of the rule of law.
- Collaborate with educational institutions, legal service providers, bar associations, and organizations that promote excellence in the judicial system to develop outreach programs and to promote community awareness of the court and its mission.
- Increase the use of technology and on-line resources to communicate more effectively with the public.
- Design and implement an activity in conjunction with Law Day.

- Create educational programs to increase financial literacy and understanding among all age groups.
- Provide training for other federal and state court judges to increase their understanding of bankruptcy-related issues that may arise in their cases.

GOAL 5.2:

Provide opportunities for the community to have ongoing input into the court's planning process.

Strategies:

- Provide means for input and discussion with the court's stakeholders regarding the court's strategic planning process and progress towards its goals.
- Identify frequently asked questions ("FAQs") and post FAQs and answers on the court's website.
- Provide means for the public to comment on the court's rules, procedures, processes, and operations, and consider the comments received.



Photo: Santa Barbara

JUDGES OF THE COURT

Honorable Peter H. Carroll
Chief Bankruptcy Judge

Honorable Barry Russell
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Sheri Bluebond
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Deborah J. Saltzman
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Riverside Division

Honorable Robin L. Riblet
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Northern Division

Honorable Maureen A. Tighe
United States Bankruptcy Judge
San Fernando Valley Division

Honorable Mark S. Wallace
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Riverside/Santa Ana Divisions

Honorable Alan M. Ahart
United States Bankruptcy Judge
San Fernando Valley Division

Honorable Theodor C. Albert
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Santa Ana Division

Honorable Scott C. Clarkson
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Riverside/Santa Ana Divisions

Honorable Vincent P. Zurzolo
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Richard M. Neiter
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Wayne Johnson
United States Bankruptcy Judge
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Honorable Ernest M. Robles
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Victoria S. Kaufman
United States Bankruptcy Judge
San Fernando Valley Division

Honorable Sandra R. Klein
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Thomas B. Donovan
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Robert Kwan
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Divisions

Honorable Julia W. Brand
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Erithe A. Smith
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Santa Ana Division

Honorable Catherine E. Bauer
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Santa Ana Division

Honorable Neil W. Bason
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Los Angeles Division

Honorable Meredith A. Jury
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Riverside Division

Honorable Mark D. Houle
United States Bankruptcy Judge
Riverside Division

RECALLED JUDGES

Honorable Geraldine Mund
United States Bankruptcy Judge
San Fernando Valley Division

Honorable Kathleen Thompson
United States Bankruptcy Judge
San Fernando Valley Division

CLERK OF COURT

Kathleen J. Campbell
Clerk of Court

Michael Rotberg
Chief Deputy-Operations

Steve Sloniker
Chief Deputy-Administration

LOCATIONS



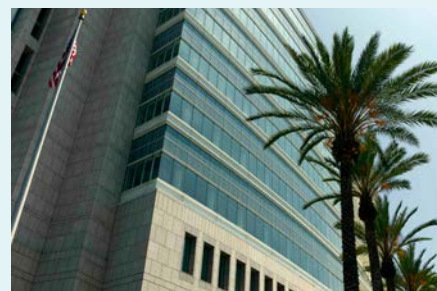
Los Angeles Division

Edward R. Roybal Federal Building
and United States Courthouse
255 East Temple Street.
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Riverside Division

3420 Twelfth Street
Riverside, CA 92501



Santa Ana Division

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Northern Division

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