



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF STANISLAUS

MEDIA RELEASE

THE SUPERIOR COURT OF STANISLAUS COUNTY ANNOUNCES NEW PRESIDING AND ASSISTANT PRESIDING JUDGES

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MODESTO, CA – The judges of the Stanislaus Superior Court elected Judge Carrie M. Stephens to serve as Presiding Judge of the Court. Her two-year term begins on January 1, 2023. Judge Stephens currently serves as Assistant Presiding Judge. She will succeed the current Presiding Judge Robert B. Westbrook, who finishes his term of office on December 31, 2022.

As presiding judge, Judge Stephens will lead the Court in the oversight and management of court operations, which includes twenty-six judicial officers, over 250 employees, and a budget of \$41 million. In this task, Judge Stephens will work closely with the Judges' Executive Committee and the Court Executive Officer, Hugh K. Swift.

"I am honored and delighted to serve in this leadership role for the court at this time," Judge Stephens commented. "Stanislaus County's bench is comprised of incredibly talented and dedicated judicial officers. I look forward to a continued spirit of collegiality amongst my fellow judges as we continue our best efforts to provide access to justice for the citizens of Stanislaus County."

Prior to her appointment to the bench, Judge Stephens served as a deputy county counsel at the Stanislaus County Counsel's Office from 1999 to 2018. She has been a member of the United States Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps since 1991. Judge Stephens served as a deputy public defender at the Stanislaus County Public Defender's Office from 1996 to 1999. She earned a Juris Doctor degree from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of the Pacific.

The judges also elected Judge Sonny S. Sandhu as Assistant Presiding Judge commencing on January 1, 2023. Judge Sandhu was appointed to the Stanislaus County Superior Court in 2018. At the time of his appointment, Judge Sandhu served as the Stanislaus County Public Defender, where he began working in 2003, as a Deputy Public Defender. Judge Sandhu is currently the president of the California Asian Pacific American Judges Association and the Stanislaus County chairperson for the California Judicial Mentorship Program. In conjunction with the Department of Criminal Justice at California State University, Stanislaus, Judge Sandhu chairs the Court Observer Program. This program allows Criminal Justice majors to gain a better understanding of trial court proceedings through observation and discussion with assigned judicial officers.

Judge Sandhu earned a Juris Doctor degree from The Ohio State University, Moritz College of Law and a Bachelor of Arts degree from University of California, Santa Barbara.

For media-related inquiries, please contact Hugh K. Swift, Court Executive Officer, at media.inquiry@stanct.org.