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Justice Ronald B. Robie
Chair



Justice Douglas P. Miller
Vice-Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE

The California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) is proud to welcome you to the inaugural issue of *The Source*, our semiannual newsletter

covering significant developments in the field of judicial ethics, CJEO opinions, and hot topics facing California's judiciary.

As we introduce this newsletter, we recognize that our justice system is confronting unprecedented change. From the technological advancements brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic to urgent calls for social justice reform, the judiciary is facing historic challenges. Ethics, and the preservation of public confidence in the integrity of our judicial system, has perhaps never felt so imperative. We understand firsthand the difficulties of balancing judicial responsibilities with our community involvement and personal lives—and the need for clear ethical guideposts.

In issuing this newsletter, our aim is to make our committee's work more widely accessible, report on important trends in judicial ethics, and provide a helpful resource for all members of the judiciary navigating these challenges, from those who may be new to the bench to those in supervisory roles. With that mind, please enjoy this issue of *The Source*.

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WEBSITE TOUR

The [CJEO website](#) is a key resource for the judiciary, both as a catalogue of CJEO opinions and a hub of information about other ethics entities and significant developments in judicial ethics law. At the site, you can find:

- [CJEO opinions](#), including a [compendium](#) of opinion summaries organized by subject matter and a [database](#) of our full-text opinions, searchable by key words and phrases;



- An [Annotated Code of Judicial Ethics](#), a full-text version of the code with annotations of CJEO opinions by canon;
- A searchable [database of the Commission on Judicial Performance's](#) public disciplinary decisions, private disciplinary summaries, and annual reports;
- [Education and resources](#), including links to relevant authorities and other ethics entities' websites, Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER) resources regarding judicial campaign ethics, informational videos, hot topics in social media, and links to judicial ethics resources from other jurisdictions, including 38 states and federal agencies.
- Information about CJEO [distribution lists](#), how to [request](#) CJEO opinions, [Invitations to Comment](#) on formal opinions, and more.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

In January 2021, the California Supreme Court adopted changes to [Rule 9.80](#) of the California Rules of Court, which effectively renamed CJEO's "oral advice summaries" to "expedited opinions." This was an important step in marking the significance of these opinions, which cover ethical issues ranging from social media to campaign rules. Click [here](#) to learn more.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JUDGE SAMANTHA P. JESSNER

[Judge Samantha P. Jessner](#) is a member of CJEO and was recently elected Assistant Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. Below, she answers questions from Sanna Singer, CJEO Staff Attorney and Editor of *The Source*, about hot topics in judicial ethics.

Q: Congratulations on your new position as Assistant Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court. What was it like to transition into this position during a pandemic?

A: It was a challenge because I transitioned into this position not only during a pandemic, but also during a record surge in infection rates in Los Angeles County. There is a very high level of anxiety among my judicial colleagues and our thousands of court employees. I've learned that it is critically important to listen so that people feel heard and reassured that leadership understands how challenging it is to work under these circumstances. I'm also more involved in the operations side of the court, which has been handling pandemic-related issues since March 2020. Staff has been undertaking things like installing plexiglass, rethinking how to summon jurors, transitioning certain jobs to a remote environment, and changing how our clerk's office does business with the public. I'm continually impressed with how the operational team has met these challenges with full recognition of the need to create a safe environment in which employees can work, judges can work, and court users can find the services they need and access our courthouses and court proceedings.

Q: You have been involved in ethics education for a significant portion of your career. What drew you to the topic of judicial ethics?

A: I can probably trace my interest in judicial ethics back to when I attended New Judge Orientation (NJO). I remember being so impressed with the knowledge base of the judicial ethics instructors and the collective energy of the group of new judges grappling with these interesting, challenging questions. I became acutely aware of the importance of the canons of judicial ethics, with which I was previously not very familiar, given the nature of what a judge does and how a judge is perceived in society, really 24/7. Over the years, I have had additional experiences and opportunities that cultivated that interest. For example, I was asked to teach at NJO and was lucky enough to be trained by Judge [David M.] Rothman, the preeminent voice on judicial ethics in California. Learning how to teach judicial ethics at the knee of a true ethics guru was a "pinch me" moment. I remember leaving that experience with a sense of enthusiasm, renewed energy, and confidence in my ability to share my interest in the subject matter with others.

Read the [full interview](#).

CJEO IN THE NEWS

- [Judges Advised They May Exchange Gifts With Staff Members, With Provisos—Metropolitan News-Enterprise](#)
 - [Unethical Social Posts From Court Staff Must Be Confronted, New Guidance for Judges Says—The Recorder](#)
 - [Judges Should Know Risks Before Attending Public Protests, Ethics Committee Says—ABA Journal](#)
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ABOUT US

CJEO is an independent Supreme Court committee of 12 judicial officers, appointed by the court, with delegated constitutional authority to issue opinions on judicial ethics. Click [here](#) to learn more about CJEO's history, mission, and our membership.

Thank You to our Readers from our Membership

[Justice Ronald B. Robie](#) (Chair) Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District
[Justice Douglas P. Miller](#) (Vice-Chair) Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two
[Justice Judith L. Haller](#), Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division One
[Justice Marla J. Miller](#), Court of Appeal, First Appellate District, Division Two
[Judge Kenneth K. So](#), Superior Court of San Diego County
[Judge Robert J. Trentacosta](#), Superior Court of San Diego County
[Assistant Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner](#), Superior Court of Los Angeles County
[Judge George J. Abdallah, Jr.](#), Superior Court of San Joaquin County
[Judge Michael T. Garcia \(Ret.\)](#), Superior Court of Sacramento County
[Judge Curtis E.A. Karnow](#), Superior Court of San Francisco County
[Judge Erica R. Yew](#), Superior Court of Santa Clara County
[Commissioner Belinda A. Handy](#), Superior Court of Riverside County

Sanna Singer, CJEO Staff Attorney and Editor, *The Source*

QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS?

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