

THE HONORABLE (RETIRED) JUDGE PATRICIA COWETT



2021 marks 30 years since the Honorable (Retired) Judge Patricia Cowett was elected by her colleagues to be the San Diego Municipal Court's Presiding Judge in 1991. Judge Cowett was the second woman to serve in this position, following the Honorable Madge Bradley, the first. Judge Cowett particularly appreciates that while she was Presiding Judge, "all three San Diego courts were run by women: Hon. Judith Keep was Chief Judge of the Federal Court, Hon. Judith McConnell was Presiding Judge of the Superior Court," considering also her presiding role at the Municipal Court. Fast-forward to 2020, Judge Cowett notes "again the Superior Court is headed by a woman, Presiding Judge Lorna Alksne, and again the functions of the court are running smoothly even in these unique times. We all should be so proud".

During her tenure as Presiding Judge, Cowett efficiently managed the Municipal Court's sizable caseload, ensuring all judges were able to handle their cases and even enabling municipal court judges to assist the Superior Court judges with their caseloads. In addition, Cowett facilitated plans for the specialized domestic violence court, bringing together all stakeholders to collaborate. She also made it a goal to equitably assign cases to the trial judges and made several gender-neutral bench committee appointments while also working to increase interest among women lawyers in the court's civil ADR list.

Following the dissolution of the Municipal Court in 1999, Judge Cowett proceeded to serve as a judge of the San Diego Superior Court until her retirement in 2008. As a Superior Court judge, and after her retirement, she has continued to work with the court and community to implement programs to address gender, racial, and ethnic bias. She was named to the State Bar's Access and Fairness Committee and served a term on the Commission on Judicial Nominees Evaluation as well as the Law Revision Commission.

Cowett's commitment to advancing the status of women in the law and society went beyond the courtroom as evident from her involvement in various women legal organizations. Cowett, a longstanding and active member of Lawyers Club, served as its 1976-1977 president. As an active member of the National Association of Women Judges, Cowett helped pioneer efforts to increase diversity on the bench.

Her exemplary service in and out of the courtroom led to many accolades including Judge of the Year Award by the San Diego County Bar Association in 2006, "Phenomenal Women Award" by the Ethnic Minority Bar Associations of



San Diego County, Trial Judge of the Year by the Consumer Attorneys of San Diego in 2008, the 2008 Belva Lockwood Award by Lawyers Club and the 2008 Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award by California Women Lawyers.

After serving 29 years on the bench, she is currently a respected mediator with ADR Services, the American Arbitration Association, and the federal district court for the Central District of California. She has settled numerous personal injury, employment, business, class action, and civil rights cases.

Her dedication to increasing diversity in the community and to the advancement of women in the legal field remains unwavering. She initiated the effort by Lawyers Club to support women as mediators and launched the Bradley Bunch of Lawyers Club, a network among retired and semi-retired lawyers and judges.

With the election of a woman to be the country's first female vice president, Lawyers Club celebrates the achievements of the women attorneys and judges such as Judge Cowett, who paved the way for so many.

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