



Hon. Mary Fingal Schulte

Judge of the Superior Court (Ret.)

Available for mediations, arbitrations, discovery reference, and private trials



Hon. Mary Fingal Schulte retired from the Orange County Superior Court in 2017 after 20 years on the bench. She enjoyed a distinguished judicial career as a respected trial judge, having herself been an experienced trial lawyer and civil litigator for nearly 20 years before her appointment to the bench. In 2016, Judge Schulte received the Trial Judge of the Year Award from the Orange County Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA).

For the last 14 years of her judicial career, Judge Schulte held various civil assignments and has presided over general jurisdiction civil trials, probate and mental health hearings and trials, appellate panel hearings, and long cause family law trials. She was Supervising Judge of the Probate/Mental Health Panel from 2009-2014, and Assistant Presiding Judge of the Appellate Panel from 2008-2009. In addition, she was actively involved in several court committees, including the executive committee; the temporary judge committee, where she developed and supervised the first courtwide training program for the court’s temporary judges and a settlement training program for the Probate Panel’s temporary judges; and the arbitration and mediation committee.

Prior to her judicial appointment, Judge Schulte began her legal career as a Deputy District Attorney for the Orange County District Attorney’s Office. She was then in private practice in Orange County for 13 years as a business and tort trial attorney, including nine years as a partner at Martin Wilson Fingal & MacDowell, with an emphasis in construction, premises and products liability litigation, insurance coverage, and medical malpractice cases.

Judge Schulte is very proficient in French.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Probate, Estates & Trusts
- Medical and Legal Malpractice
- Insurance Coverage
- Family and Elder Law
- Discovery and Judicial Reference
- Personal Injury and Products Liability
- Partnership Disputes
- Employment
- Breach of Contract, Real Estate
- Construction Contract Disputes

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Orange 1998-2017

Civil Court Assignments:

- General Jurisdiction Civil Trials Panel, 2014-2017
- Supervising Judge, Probate/Mental Health Panel, 2009-2014
- Assistant Presiding Judge, Appellate Panel, 2008-2009
- Appellate Panel, 2007-2009
- Long Cause Family Law Trials, 2007-2009
- General Jurisdiction Civil Trials Panel, 2003-2009

Judge of the Municipal Court of California, County of Orange 1997-1998

- Appointed by Gov. Pete Wilson, August 25, 1997
- Elevated to Superior Court, August 10, 1998

LITIGATION EXPERIENCE

Partner and Vice-President, Martin Wilson Fingal & MacDowell 1988-1997

- Civil litigation practice emphasizing construction, premises and products liability, insurance coverage, and medical malpractice

Associate, Martin & Wilson 1987-1988

Associate, Gardner & Martin 1984-1987

Deputy District Attorney, Orange County District Attorney’s Office 1978-1981

AWARDS

- Trial Judge of the Year, ABOTA – Orange County Chapter 2016
- Judicial Civility Award, Robert Banyard Inn of Court 2013
- Judicial Civility Award, ABOTA – Orange County Chapter 2003
- St. Thomas More Award, St. Thomas More Society of Orange County 2002

EDUCATION

Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine, “Mediating the Litigated Case” 2018

Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine, “Elder Care Mediation” 2018

University of California at Davis, Juris Doctor 1977

California State University at Fullerton, Bachelor of Arts in History 1974

BAR ADMISSIONS

Admitted to practice before all California State Courts, all Federal District Courts (trial level) in California, and the United States Supreme Court

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA)

ABOTA Foundation, Senior Life Fellow

ABOTA Foundation, Legacy Fellow – Patriot of the Foundation

State Bar of California

Robert Banyard Inn of Court, Member, Board of Directors, 2000-Present; President, 2010-2012

California Judges Association

International Academy of Trial Judges

Orange County Bar Association

Italian American Lawyers of Orange County

Orange County Trial Lawyers Association

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Chairperson, Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Commission for the Diocese of Orange, 1999-2005

Oblate, Order of St. Benedict, affiliated with St. Andrew’s Abbey in Valyermo, California

Member, Advisory Board, St. Andrews Abbey, Valyermo, California

Hospice Volunteer

Constitutional Rights Foundation, Mock trial coach and volunteer judge, 1997-Present