



Hon. Maria-Elena James

United States Magistrate Judge (Ret.)



Hon. Maria-Elena James has served on the bench for a remarkable thirty years, first as a Civil and Family Law Commissioner with the San Francisco Superior Court, and later for twenty-four years as a United States Magistrate Judge with the Northern District of California. She further served as the Chief Magistrate Judge of the Northern District for three years. In 2010, she was honored with the San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association’s “Federal Jurist of the Year” award.

Known for her professionalism and even-handed temperament, Judge James conducted thousands of settlement conferences as a Magistrate Judge and became highly regarded for her ability to settle disputes. Previously, as a Family Law Commissioner, she had established a formal program of procedures for settlements. Judge James also served as the Northern District’s ADR Magistrate Judge, where she was in charge of coordinating the alternative dispute resolution program with the Court.

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

- United States Magistrate Judge, Northern District of California 1994-2018
 - Chief Magistrate Judge, Northern District of California 2009-2012
 - Alternative Dispute Resolution Magistrate Judge, Northern District of California
- Superior Court Commissioner, San Francisco Superior Court 1988-1994
 - Civil Discovery and Civil Law Motion Commissioner 1988-1989
 - Family Law Commissioner 1989-1994

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

- San Francisco City Attorney’s Office, Family and Child Services Department 1984-1988
 - Deputy City Attorney
 - Supervising Attorney
- National Labor Relations Board, Staff Attorney 1983-1984
- San Francisco Deputy Public Defender 1979-1983
- San Francisco District Attorney’s Office 1978-1979
 - Director of the San Francisco Small Claims Court Education Project
 - Consumer Fraud Unit

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Civil Rights/Discrimination
- Employment
- Environmental
- Family Law
- Intellectual Property
- Securities/Commodities

EDUCATION

- University of San Francisco School of Law, J.D. 1978
- University of California, Irvine School of Social Ecology, B.A. 1975