

HON. TANI G. CANTIL-SAKAUYE



Chief Justice of California (Ret.)

Available for: Mediations, Case Evaluations,
Consultations, Moot Courts, Mock Trials,
Special Master



Hon. Tani G. Cantil-Sakaue (Ret.) joined ADR Services, Inc. in 2023 after a lifelong career of serving the law with integrity. She previously served as the 28th Chief Justice of California.

A native of Sacramento, California, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakaue graduated from the University of California, Davis, with a degree in rhetoric before earning her J.D. from UC Davis School of Law. She began her legal career as a Deputy District Attorney in Sacramento County, where she spent four years prosecuting numerous felony and misdemeanor cases in jury trials to verdict. After that, she served on the senior staff of Governor George Deukmejian in two capacities: first as Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary and later as Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary.

Chief Justice Cantil-Sakaue has served for 32 years on California appellate and trial courts, and has been appointed or elevated to higher office by three governors. In 1990, Governor Deukmejian appointed her to the Sacramento Municipal Court and in 1997, Governor Pete Wilson elevated her to the Superior Court of Sacramento County. As a Superior Court Judge, she established and presided over the first court in Sacramento dedicated solely to domestic violence issues. In addition, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakaue chaired the court's criminal law committee and was a member of the Presiding Judge's task force on domestic violence and the Home Court committee. In 2005, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed her to the Third District Court of Appeal.

After Governor Schwarzenegger nominated her as Chief Justice of California on July 22, 2010, the California State Bar Judicial Nominees Evaluation Commission rated her as exceptionally well-qualified for the position. At a public hearing on August 25, 2010, she was unanimously confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments, and in a statewide general election on November 2, 2010, she was elected by an overwhelming majority of California voters. She was sworn into office on January 3, 2011, becoming the first person of color, first Asian-Filipina American, and the second woman to serve as the state's Chief Justice.

As Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakaue was responsible for all administrative, budget, and policy decisions of the highest court in the state, while maintaining the same caseload and duties as the Associate Justices, including deciding petitions for review, extraordinary writs, and authoring court opinions that resolved the most important and conflicted areas of California law. Her tenure on the Supreme Court was marked by her rigorous analysis of legal issues and her commitment to upholding the rule of law. Additionally, she served as Chair of the Judicial Council of California, the administrative policymaking body of state courts, and the Commission on Judicial Appointments.

As head of the California judiciary, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakaue has championed judicial reform, working to improve access to justice, advocating for greater transparency, and reforming state court funding models that disproportionately impacted low-income individuals. She was a leader in revitalizing civic learning through her Power of Democracy initiative, which was developed to inform Californians about the courts and the role of the judiciary. In an effort to improve transparency, she opened meetings of the Judicial Council and its advisory bodies that were once closed to the public and made public comment more accessible.

Chief Justice Cantil-Sakaue's leadership has earned her numerous awards and accolades, including the 2012 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, the highest award bestowed by the American Bar Association in recognition of the accomplishments of women lawyers in the nation who have excelled in their field. In 2022, she was the recipient of the California Lawyers Association's inaugural Judicial Excellence

Award, which was established to recognize a member of the California Judicial Branch who exemplifies commitment to the improvement of the administration of justice and preserving the rule of law.

Throughout her career, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye has remained committed to the principles of fairness, integrity, and justice. Her unwavering dedication to these values has made her a respected and influential figure in the legal community, and an exemplar for aspiring judges and attorneys.

EDUCATION

Juris Doctor, University of California at Davis, School of Law 1984
Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric, University of California at Davis, Dean's List 1980

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Neutral, ADR Services, Inc. 2023-Present

- Handles mediations, case evaluations, consultations, moot courts, and mock trials in all areas of civil law, including Employment, Business, Wage & Hour, Personal Injury, Government Claims Act, Insurance, Real Estate, Healthcare, and others.

President & CEO of The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) 2023-Present

- Responsible for and oversees this charitable trust, nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank whose mission is to inform and improve public policy in California through independent, objective, nonpartisan research.

Chief Justice of California 2011-2022

- Appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and unanimously confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments and later elected statewide to the same position.

Three separate areas of responsibility:

1. Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, the highest court in the state.
 - Responsible for all administrative, budget and policy decisions of the seven-justice court and staff.
 - Maintain the same caseload and duties as all of the other justices, including the privilege of deciding petitions for review, extraordinary writs, and authoring court opinions that resolve the most important and conflicted areas of California law.
2. Chair of the Judicial Council, a separate constitutional body in charge of the judiciary statewide.
 - Lead the third branch of government, the judicial branch of California.
 - Lead the Judicial Council, a constitutional entity consisting of appointed justices, judges, legislators, lawyers, and court staff, and collectively responsible for all rule and policymaking for the California judicial branch - the largest law-trained and most diverse judiciary in the country.
 - Responsible for the annual multibillion-dollar budget of the statewide judicial branch.
 - Responsible for the 800-member judicial staff.
3. Head of the Judiciary
 - Represent the judiciary with the other two branches of government, the executive and legislative branches.
 - Lead the judiciary on equity initiatives, surveys, studies and new proposals.

Third District Court of Appeal, Associate Appellate Justice 2005-2011

- Appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and unanimously confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments and later elected to the same position.
- Heard and resolved both criminal and civil appeals and writs arising from 23 state courts of record in 23 counties under the legal jurisdiction of the Third District.

Sacramento Superior Court, Judge 1997-2005

- Appointed by Governor Pete Wilson and later elected to same position.
- Presided over serious felony matters including jury and bench trials and all civil matters including jury and bench trials.

Sacramento Municipal Court, Judge 1990-1997

- Appointed by Governor George Deukmejian.
- Presided over criminal matters, including misdemeanor and low-level felony hearings and bench and jury trials, and civil matters, including both bench and jury trials.

California Governor's Office, Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary 1989-1990

- Assisted the Legislative Affairs Secretary to Governor George Deukmejian on all legislation during the legislative session.
- Responsible for specific legislation pertaining to designated areas of law.
- Advocated directly with California legislators on legislation of interest to the Governor.
- Authored legislative memoranda, advice and letters to legislators, executives and other states.
- Met as directed with specific legislators on behalf of the Governor.

California Governor's Office, Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary 1988-1989

- Assisted the lead lawyer to Governor George Deukmejian on all litigation against the Governor and the executive branch.
- Advocated the Governor's position in court.
- Assisted and directed lawyer teams in brief writing and strategy regarding the Governor's interests.
- Represented the Governor's interests to executive branch legal departments.
- Liaised with the California Attorney General's Office regarding relevant state litigation.
- Drafted legal letters and memoranda for a wide variety of recipients, including other heads of states and other countries at the direction of and on behalf of the Governor.
- Advised the Governor upon request.

Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, Deputy District Attorney 1984-1988

- First Chair, prepared and prosecuted misdemeanor and felony cases in jury trials to verdict.

AFFILIATIONS

- University of Virginia, Masters of Public Safety program, Adjunct Professor (online), 2022-Present
- National Judicial College, Board Member, 2022-Present
- Brennan Center For Justice, (NYU) State Court Reports, Advisory Board Member, 2023-Present
- California LAW Pathway, Leadership Advisory Council Member, 2022-Present