



HON. LESLIE G. LANDAU (RET.)

Mediator • Arbitrator • Referee



Hon. Leslie G. Landau (Ret.) joined ADR Services, Inc. in 2023 after 20 years of distinguished service as a Judge of the Superior Court for the County of Contra Costa.

After graduating from Cornell Law School in 1983 and clerking for Judge William E. Doyle in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, Judge Landau joined the litigation practice at McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen in San Francisco. She developed a specialty in appeals, argued cases for clients in appellate courts throughout the country, and was national appellate counsel for several automobile manufacturers. She became a partner in 1990, served as Managing Partner of the San Francisco office, and chaired the Appellate Group (both for the McCutchen firm and the successor merged firm, Bingham McCutchen LLP). Her appellate practice required her to quickly master legal issues and complex factual matters across a broad range of substantive areas, including product liability, federal securities law, federal preemption and other constitutional issues. She was elected a member of the California Academy of Appellate Lawyers in 2000.

Judge Landau was appointed to the Contra Costa Superior Court bench by Governor Gray Davis in 2003. She sat in multiple assignments during her 20-year judicial career. Although a civil attorney by training and experience, in her early years Judge Landau served on the criminal side of the bench, mastering criminal law and procedure to handle high volume calendars, decide legal and evidentiary motions, and preside over hundreds of jury trials. In 2015, Judge Landau moved to the civil side of the Court, where she sat in juvenile and family law assignments. During her two tours in the Family Division, she presided over thousands of contested and complex family law matters – settlement conferences, short-cause hearings, and long-cause trials -- involving every conceivable issue arising in family law. She became well-versed in the nuances of issues including child custody and visitation, child and spousal support, marital dissolution, division of property, business valuation, complex accounting, move-aways, and separate property tracing disputes. Judge Landau served as the Supervising Judge of the Family Division of the Court, working closely with the Bar to help shepherd the Court's move to electronic filing, adopt hybrid appearance technology and rules, and assure access to justice as the Court managed and emerged from the COVID crisis.

Judge Landau brought her appellate expertise to the Superior Court, serving as a longtime member of the Court's Appellate Division, including several stints as its Presiding Judge. She authored hundreds of Appellate Division opinions, on issues arising out of criminal cases, limited civil matters and writs. A collaborative colleague and exceptional writer, Judge Landau was often tapped by other judicial officers to work through complex legal issues and review and revise draft opinions.

Judge Landau has been recognized by the legal community for being hardworking, a deep legal thinker, a quick study, human and fair. She is a thoughtful and creative jurist, as good with people as she is with complex and subtle legal issues. Her ability to see and connect with the people behind the disputes make her an effective mediator and communicator. Her clear writing makes her decisions understandable and compelling. She anticipates issues, particularly in complex custody and business disputes, assisting parties in managing potential pitfalls and crafting decisions that account for them. In 2023, she was honored as Trial Judge of the Year by the Alameda-Contra Costa Trial Lawyers Association (ACCTLA).

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

- Appellate
- Business & Contract
- Civil Rights
- Constitutional Issues
- Elder Abuse
- Family Law
- Landlord/Tenant
- Personal Injury
- Product Liability

FAMILY LAW EXPERTISE

Character, Valuation and Division of Property: accounting for separate property contributions to community property and community contributions to separate property; tracing for separate property reimbursement claims; business valuation; valuation and division of unusual and illiquid assets; accounting for non-salary compensation, including performance bonuses, commissions, stock distribution and stock options; deferred compensation and post-separation buyout of vacation accrued during marriage; reimbursement and post-separation accounting; claims of fiduciary breach.

Child Custody and Visitation: high conflict parents, parental substance abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, parental alienation and estrangement; children with physical and mental health challenges, learning differences, refuse/resist dynamics, school refusal, gender dysphoria; school choice and home schooling; “move away” disputes.

Spousal and Child Support: establishment, modification, and enforcement of support orders; income available for support, including self-employment income, income tax write offs and depreciation, cash wages, investment and rental income, family gifts, loans, disability, vocational evaluations, and imputed income; support for adult children under Family Code section 3910.

Contested Separation Date: divergent separation date claims; equivocal communication about separation.

Post-Judgment Issues: modification of permanent spousal support, omitted assets, fraud claims.

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

Judge of the Superior Court, County of Contra Costa **2003-2023**
Supervising Judge of Family Court, 2022-2023.
Family Law, 2015-2018, 2022-2023.
Appellate Division, 2011-2023.
Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Dependency, 2018-2021.
Member of Executive Committee, 2013-2015, 2022-2023.
Supervising Judge of Richmond Branch, 2013-2015.
Criminal Law, 2003-2015.

PRIOR LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Partner, McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen (later Bingham McCutchen) **1984-2003**
Managing Partner of San Francisco office, 2002-2003. Chair of Appellate Group, 2000-2003. Involved in the creation and management of Women’s Mentoring Program for women associates. Partner since 1990.

University of California, Hastings College of the Law **1987, 1991**
Adjunct Associate Professor of Remedies, 1987. Lecturer, Moot Court Program, 1991.

Law Clerk to the Honorable William E. Doyle **1983-1984**
United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, Denver, Colorado.

EDUCATION

J.D., *cum laude*, Cornell Law School, Ithaca, NY **1983**

Article Editor, Cornell Law Review. Student Counsel, Cornell Legal Aid Clinic. Director, Gilbert & Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*.

B.A. *magna cum laude*, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT **1980**

Majors in Psychology and French Literature. Received Limbach Prize for Outstanding Community Service for founding Rape Crisis Center serving central Connecticut.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Lawyer Representative to the USDC Northern District Judicial Conference

Co-Chair of the Northern District Judicial Conference

Elected Member of California Academy of Appellate Lawyers

Member of Board of Directors and Chair of Amicus Committee, California Women Lawyers

Member of Board of Directors, San Francisco Women Lawyers Alliance

Member of Litigation Committee, Equal Rights Advocates