

HON. JO-LYNNE LEE (RET.)

Mediator • Arbitrator • Referee

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Hon. Jo-Lynne Lee (Ret.) brings more than four decades of legal experience to her role as a neutral, including over 20 years on the bench and two decades as a civil litigator and court-appointed Special Master. Appointed to the Alameda County Superior Court in 2002, she made history as the first Asian-American female judge appointed to that court and served with distinction for more than two decades.

Judge Lee now focuses her practice on mediation, arbitration, and discovery reference in complex civil matters, including personal injury, wage and hour, environmental, mass torts, business torts, construction, landlord-tenant, and commercial contract disputes.

While on the bench, Judge Lee served in the court's settlement department, where she mediated approximately five to ten cases per week, helping parties resolve disputes involving catastrophic injury, wrongful death, workplace disputes, landlord-tenant conflicts, partnership breakups, and a wide range of business and commercial issues. She is especially adept at identifying and addressing the underlying emotional, strategic, and financial drivers of impasse and brings a steady, pragmatic mindset to negotiation.

For several years, Judge Lee presided over Alameda County's asbestos litigation docket involving mass tort and toxic exposure claims, often touching on novel scientific and medical evidence issues, including genetic risk factors. She conducted one of the first fully remote civil jury trials during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating her adaptability and leadership in the evolving litigation landscape. Judge Lee continues to be sought after for her subject-matter expertise in construction defect and delay, mass torts, CEQA and land use, and environmental contamination. She has been recognized for her fluency in technical material and her ability to distill complex concepts for attorneys and litigants alike.

Known for her deliberate, calm, and focused style, Judge Lee is widely respected by both colleagues and litigators for her thorough preparation, balanced temperament, and commitment to equitable outcomes. She approaches dispute resolution with a practical, problem-solving focus, taking time to understand the legal and personal stakes of each matter. In decision-making assignments, she brings a trial judge's discipline and fairness, evaluating the record with care and applying the law to reach reasoned, evidence-based outcomes.

A lifelong learner, Judge Lee took a judicial sabbatical in 2023 to conduct a comparative study of asbestos litigation practice in the U.S. and England and Wales as a Visiting Fellow at the Commercial Law Centre, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford. She co-wrote an article on the use of genetic evidence in asbestos litigation in the U.S. and in England and Wales which was published in April, 2026 issue of the Journal of Personal Injury Lawyers (JPIL). In Fall 2025, she was a Visiting Researcher at the University of Reading studying legacy litigation disposal transactions.

Before her judicial appointment, Judge Lee spent 20 years in private practice as a civil trial lawyer, handling matters involving personal injury, insurance defense, construction, and complex commercial litigation. She also served as a Special Master and Discovery Referee in coordinated actions, often involving procedurally intensive, multi-party disputes. Earlier in her career, she served as an Assistant

U.S. Attorney in the Northern District of California and as an Assistant District Attorney in Bronx County, New York, where she tried serious felony cases to verdict.

Judge Lee is a member of the American Bar Association, Asian American Bar Association, Alameda County Bar Association, and California Judges Association. Her civic involvement includes past board service with the Rotary Club of Oakland, the YWCA of Oakland, and Redwood Day School. She was recognized by the YWCA's Salute to Women program for her leadership and contributions to the legal profession and community. In 2024, Judge Lee was named Trial Judge of the Year by the San Francisco Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) and by the Alameda-Contra Costa Trial Lawyers' Association (ACCTLA).

She earned her J.D. from Columbia University School of Law and her B.A. in Political Science, magna cum laude, from Brooklyn College, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Business & Contracts
- Construction
- Employment
- Mass Torts
- Personal Injury
- Product Defect
- Property Disputes

EDUCATION

- Columbia University School of Law, J.D. | 1974
- Brooklyn College, CUNY, B.A., Political Science, *Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa* | 1970

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

Judge, Superior Court of California, County of Alameda | 2002-2025
- First Asian-American woman appointed to this court
- Presided over criminal and civil cases; notable decisions include rulings on CEQA, Anti-SLAPP, and complex torts

LEGAL AND ADR EXPERIENCE

Special Master & Mediator, Griffiths & Castle, Pleasant Hill, CA | 1998-2002
- Mediated and coordinated complex civil litigation and construction defect matters
- Appointed as Discovery Referee and served as Judge *Pro Tem* in small claims court

Of Counsel, Gong, Mitchell, Combs & Lee, Oakland, CA | 1985-1997
- Represented public and private entities in civil litigation, including jury trials involving environmental and construction claims

Associate Attorney, Robinson & Wood, San Jose, CA | 1981-1985
- Insurance defense work; appeared regularly in court on law & motion, trial preparation

Assistant U.S. Attorney, U.S. Attorney's Office, N.D. Cal., San Francisco, CA | 1978-1980
- Prosecuted federal criminal cases; jury trial experience in tax and bank robbery matters

Staff Attorney, National Center for State Courts, San Francisco, CA | 1977-1978

- Conducted nationwide court studies on trial delay; co-authored landmark publications on litigation pace

Assistant District Attorney, Bronx County District Attorney's Office, NY | 1974-1977

- Assigned to Major Offense Bureau; jury trials involving felony rape, robbery, assault

PUBLICATIONS

- Co-Author, "Litigation of Low-Dose Mesothelioma Claims in the United Kingdom and United States In the Era of Genetic Evidence," Journal of Personal Injury Lawyers (JPIL), April 2026
- Author, "Adjudicating Asbestos Claims in California and England: A Comparative Study Mass Claims," July 2024
- Author, "Pre-Trial Delay: A Review and Bibliography," NCSC, 1978
- Co-Author, "Justice Delayed: The Pace of Litigation in Urban Trial Courts," NCSC, 1978
- Consultant, *California Judges Benchbook*, Judicial Council of California

BOARD SERVICE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Rotary Club of Oakland, No. 3

- Member, 1991–Present; Board of Trustees, 2000–2002; Education Support Chair, 1997-1998; Participated in Rotary's international polio vaccination initiative in Ghana

YWCA of Oakland

- Board of Directors, 1982–1991; 2000–2001; Strategic Planning Committee, 2000–2002

Redwood Day School, Oakland, CA

- Board of Trustees, 1996–1998; Vice President, 1998

Alameda Point Restoration Advisory Board

- Member, 1997–Present; Community Co-Chair, 1999
- Worked on environmental clean-up of the former Alameda Naval Air Station, a Super-Fund site

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- Trial Judge of the Year, American Board Of Trial Attorneys (ABOTA)– San Francisco Chapter, 2024
- Trial Judge of the Year, Alameda-Contra Costa Trial Lawyers' Association, 2024
- YWCA Salute to Women Honoree, 1991

BAR ADMISSIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

- California State Bar
- Alameda County Bar Association
- American Bar Association
- Asian-American Bar Association
- California Judges Association
- National Association of Women Judges
- Women Lawyers of Alameda County