HON. RUTH KWAN (RET.)

Mediator • Arbitrator • Referee

ADR SERVICES, INC.

After more than four decades in the legal profession, including 31 years of judicial service, the Honorable Ruth Kwan (Ret.) brings extensive experience in civil litigation, trial risk, judicial decision-making, case management, and dispute resolution to her work as a mediator, arbitrator and referee.

Judge Kwan was appointed to the East Los Angeles Municipal Court in 1995 and elevated to the Los Angeles Superior Court in 1998, becoming only the second Chinese-American woman to serve on the California Superior Court bench. She spent the last 19 years of her judicial career presiding at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse.

Her civil experience is particularly substantial. Judge Kwan spent 14 years in an Independent Calendar Court, where she presided over business and commercial disputes, real estate matters, construction defect, insurance bad faith, personal injury matters including wrongful death and traumatic brain injury, sexual abuse, asbestos and products liability, and employment matters including class actions, PAGA, FEHA, and wage-and-hour claims. She later served in a Long Cause Civil Trial Court and also served as Assistant Supervising Judge of the Civil Division.

Judge Kwan's settlement experience spans decades. Upon her retirement, her judicial colleagues recognized her for presiding with skill, work ethic, and integrity over "countless settlements and trials." That experience is complemented by her pre-bench work at the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, where she supervised the Dispute Resolution Program in addition to the Consumer Protection Section. As an attorney for the City of Los Angeles, she handled numerous high-profile consumer fraud cases, and authored the City's price-gouging ordinance following the 1994 Northridge Earthquake - the first ordinance of its kind in California.

Her years managing civil cases from filing through trial give Judge Kwan a practical understanding of what drives settlement: the strength of the evidence, credibility, damages, legal uncertainty, litigation cost, timing, and the risk of leaving the outcome to a judge or jury. Her background allows her to engage directly with complex factual and legal issues while helping parties focus on the points that genuinely affect case value and resolution.

Judge Kwan has also presided over hundreds of jury trials. That trial experience gives her a grounded perspective on how arguments actually perform in a courtroom and on the difference between a position that appears persuasive on paper and one that is likely to resonate with a jury.

Judge Kwan has been repeatedly recognized by the legal community for her judicial excellence, unparalleled work ethic, public service, and leadership. Her honors include the Association of Southern California Defense Counsel's 2026 Judge of the Year, the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles 2024 Trial Judge of the Year Award, the Los Angeles Chapter of ABOTA's 2022 Judge of the Year, the Asian Pacific American Bar Association's 2021 Public Service Award, the Armenian Bar Association’s 2019 Judge Night Honoree recognition, and the Metropolitan News-Enterprise's 2023 Person of the Year designation. She has also received numerous accolades from the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association, including the Judge Delbert E. Wong Distinguished Service Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award, as well as multiple honors from the Korean Community Lawyers Association, including its 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award.

TYPES OF CASES HANDLED

- Business / Commercial Contract
- Class Actions / PAGA
- Employment
- Medical Malpractice
- Partnership Disputes / Dissolution
- Personal Injury
- Real Estate

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

Judge - Los Angeles County Superior Court **1998 – 2026**

- Appointed in 1998 as only the second Chinese-American woman to serve on the California Superior Court bench.
- Served for 14 years in an Independent Calendar Court, where she presided over business and commercial disputes, real estate matters, construction defects, insurance bad faith cases, personal injury matters including wrongful death, TBI, sexual abuse, asbestos and products liability, and employment matters which included class actions, PAGA, FEHA, and wage and hour violations.
- Presided over hundreds of civil trials and mandatory settlement conferences.
- Served as Assistant Supervising Judge of the Civil Division.
- Presided over felony jury trials in Downtown Los Angeles, including sexual abuse, murder, rape, and other violent felonies.
- Co-Chair, Law Clerk Committee; Chair, Court Commissioner Selection Committee.
- Co-Chair, Court's Diversity Inclusion Working Group.
- Member of the production team that developed the Court's Trial Advocacy Skills Program.

Judge - East Los Angeles Municipal Court **1995 – 1998**

- Appointed in 1995.
- Served as Assistant Presiding Judge of the Court.

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Deputy City Attorney - Los Angeles City Attorney's Office **1981 – 1995**

- Supervised the Consumer Protection Section and the Dispute Resolution Program, overseeing development, enforcement, and prosecution of consumer protection laws.
- Handled numerous high-profile consumer fraud cases as a trial attorney.
- Authored the City of Los Angeles's price-gouging ordinance following the 1994 Northridge Earthquake — the first ordinance of its kind in California.

EDUCATION

J.D., UC Law San Francisco (formerly UC Hastings) 1981

B.A., *cum laude*, University of Southern California 1978

AWARDS & HONORS

- Association of Southern California Defense Counsel, Judge of the Year, 2026
- Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles, Trial Judge of the Year, 2024
- Korean Community Lawyers Association, Lifetime Achievement Award, 2024
- Metropolitan News-Enterprise, "Person of the Year", 2023
- Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA), AAPI Heritage Month Honoree, 2023
- American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA), Los Angeles Chapter, Judge of the Year, 2022
- Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Public Service Award, 2021
- Armenian Bar Association, Judges' Night Honoree, 2019
- Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association, Judge Delbert E. Wong Distinguished Service Award
- Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association Foundation, Fellowship Established in Her Honor

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

A sought-after speaker and educator, Judge Kwan has frequently lectured and served as a panelist for judicial, legal, and bar association programs throughout California. She has presented on a wide range of litigation and trial topics, including expert witness testimony, products liability (the consumer expectation test), summary judgment, discovery, employment, legal ethics, and implicit bias. Her speaking engagements have included programs for the Association of Southern California Defense Counsel (ASCDC), the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles (CAALA), the Employment Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA), the California Employment Lawyers Association (CELA), the League of California Cities City Attorneys Conference, the Korean Community Lawyers Association (KCLA), and the Korean American Bar Association (KABA).

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Association of Business Trial Lawyers, Los Angeles Chapter
- Los Angeles County Bar Association, Litigation Section
- Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association
- State Bar of California, member since 1981

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What types of cases does Judge Kwan handle as a neutral?
Judge Kwan's civil judicial experience spans business and commercial disputes, real estate, construction defect, insurance bad faith, personal injury and wrongful death, traumatic brain injury, sexual abuse, asbestos and products liability, employment disputes, class actions, PAGA, FEHA, wage-and-hour claims, medical malpractice, and other complex civil matters. Her 14 years in an Independent Calendar Court, as well as her 5 years presiding over Long Cause Trials, required her to evaluate cases across a broad range of substantive areas from early case management through trial.

What makes Judge Kwan well suited to help resolve difficult civil cases?
Judge Kwan combines extensive civil bench experience with decades of hands-on dispute resolution and trial experience. She spent 14 years managing an Independent Calendar Court, later served in a Long Cause Civil Trial Court, and was publicly recognized for having presided over countless settlements and trials. Before joining the bench, she also supervised the Los Angeles City Attorney's Dispute Resolution Program. That combination gives her a practical understanding of both the legal merits of a

dispute and the human, financial, and strategic considerations that often determine whether a case can settle.

How much trial experience does Judge Kwan have?
Judge Kwan has presided over hundreds of trials during more than three decades on the bench. Her assignments included complex civil matters at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse as well as violent and serious felony jury trials during her earlier judicial career. She also handled high-profile consumer fraud matters as a trial attorney before her appointment to the bench.

How much civil judicial experience does Judge Kwan have?
Judge Kwan served 28 years on the Los Angeles County Superior Court. She spent 14 years in an Independent Calendar Court handling a broad civil docket, later served in a Long Cause Civil Trial Court for 5 years, and served as Assistant Supervising Judge of the Civil Division. She also served twice as a *Justice Pro Tem* for the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District.

What is Judge Kwan's approach to case evaluation and settlement?
Judge Kwan's record reflects an emphasis on careful analysis, efficiency, fairness, and clarity. Colleagues have described her as a judge who quickly mastered complex assignments, ran an efficient calendar, and issued thoughtful and clear rulings. In mediation, that background supports a direct and practical evaluation of litigation risk, including evidentiary strengths and weaknesses, damages exposure, credibility, jury risk, cost, delay, and the consequences of continued litigation.

Why consider Judge Ruth Ann Kwan as a mediator, arbitrator or referee in Los Angeles?
Judge Kwan offers a rare combination of 31 years of judicial service, 28 years on the Superior Court, 14 years managing a civil Independent Calendar assignment, hundreds of jury trials, and longstanding dispute-resolution experience. She has spent decades evaluating evidence, legal arguments, credibility, litigation risk, and settlement dynamics across a wide range of civil cases.