



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO

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Judge Bunmi O. Awoniyi Selected as Sacramento County Bar Association’s 2025 “Judge of the Year”

Sacramento, CA — Sacramento Superior Court Presiding Judge Bunmi O. Awoniyi will be recognized by attorneys and judicial officers when presented with the Sacramento County Bar Association’s “Judge of the Year” award at the Bench Bar Reception set for May 15.

The annual award is given to a judge who has enhanced the justice system and served the Sacramento County legal community.

“The local legal community is fortunate to have Judge Awoniyi on the bench and leading the Sacramento Superior Court,” said Assistance Presiding Judge Lawrence G. Brown. “She is an accomplished jurist, truly committed to justice both in the courtroom and the community at large.”

Judge Awoniyi started her legal career in 1988 when she was called to the Bar of England and Wales as a Barrister at Law. After completing Pupilage, she served as a Crown Prosecutor in London.

In 1990, Judge Awoniyi received the Pegasus International Lawyer Scholarship, founded by The Honorable Lord Goff in 1987 in conjunction with the American Inns of Court and the English Inns of Court. As a recipient, Judge Awoniyi came to Sacramento, Calif.

After challenging the bar, Judge Awoniyi was certified by the California Board of Specialization as a Family Law Specialist and maintained a family law practice for 18 years. Gov. Jerry Brown appointed her to the Sacramento Superior Court bench in 2012.

Since her appointment, Judge Awoniyi has served rotations in Family Law, Criminal Domestic Violence, Criminal Trials, and Master Calendar for all Criminal assignments.

She also served as the Supervising Judge for Family Law and Probate for four years and the court's Assistant Presiding Judge for two years.

In September 2023, Judge Awoniyi was unanimously elected by the bench to serve as the next Presiding Judge. Her two-year term started Jan. 1, 2024, and continues through Dec. 31, 2025. She is the first African American Presiding Judge for the unified Superior Court of Sacramento County.

"I nominated Judge Awoniyi for 'Judge of the Year' because her deep commitment to justice consistently sets the highest standard for our bench," said Judge Kara K. Ueda.

Judge Awoniyi serves as a faculty presenter for the Center for Judicial Education and Research for judicial officers. She also teaches and mentors the next generation of lawyers as an adjunct professor at Lincoln Law School, where she teaches Family Law and Community Property. She has also held adjunct professor positions at McGeorge School of Law and UC Davis Extension College.

Judge Awoniyi sits on the court's Executive Committee and was appointed by the Chief Justice of California as a voting member of the Judicial Council of California. She also serves on the Judicial Council Family Law Curriculum Committee, Judicial Council Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, and the Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee.

In addition to her volunteerism in the legal community, Awoniyi is committed to serving vulnerable populations beyond the bench. She has volunteered in Nigeria, South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, serving women and indigents, coordinating medical support, visiting schools and orphanages, and providing family counseling and services to adolescent youth, single mothers, and domestic violence victims.

"Having worked alongside Judge Awoniyi, I can say without hesitation that this recognition is more than well-deserved," said Chief Judge Troy Nunley. "She exemplifies the very best of the judiciary."

Every year since 1988, the SCBA has selected a member of the bench to receive its Judge of the Year Award. The selection, made by the SCBA Board of Directors, is based upon five criteria: commitment to the principle of the SCBA Mission Statement "to enhance the system of justice, the lawyers who serve it, and the community served by it"; commitment to fair and equitable administration of the courts; respected for legal abilities by fellow judges and attorneys who appear before him/her; known for appropriate judicial demeanor and lack of bias; and demonstrated service to the Sacramento community at large.

The 2024 Bench Bar Reception will be held on Thursday, May 15, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 1209 L Street, Sacramento, CA, 95814.