



# SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF MONTEREY

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **MONTEREY COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT OF JUDGE LYDIA M. VILLARREAL**

Monterey County Superior Court Presiding Judge Julie R. Culver announces the retirement of Judge Lydia M. Villarreal effective April 28, 2021, after 20 years of service on the Monterey County Superior Court bench.

Judge Villarreal was appointed to the Monterey bench by Governor Gray Davis in 2001. During her tenure, Judge Villarreal presided over Civil and Criminal cases, serving in all three courthouses – King City, Salinas, and Monterey. She served as Presiding Judge in 2018 and 2019 and as Supervising Judge of the Monterey Division in 2020.

Statewide, Judge Villarreal was appointed by Governor Newsom to serve on the Judicial Selection Advisory Committee, to assist with the vetting of judicial candidates. She also serves on the Executive Board of the California Latino Judges Association.

Prior to her appointment to the local bench, Judge Villarreal worked as a Deputy District Attorney in Monterey County in the Consumer/Environmental Unit. Early in her career she worked for California Rural Legal Assistance, heading up the Migrant Farmworker Unit. Judge Villarreal obtained her undergraduate degree in Psychology with Honors from the University of California at Santa Cruz, and her Juris Doctor from UC Berkeley Law School. While in law school she clerked for Justice Newman of the California Supreme Court.

Judge Villarreal's commitment to improving the lives of others includes serving on boards for nonprofit organizations. She has served on the boards of The James Irvine Foundation, where she was the first Latina and first female chair, as well on the boards of CSU Monterey Bay, President's Council; Natividad Medical Center; Monterey Bay Aquarium; National Steinbeck Center; and the Elkhorn Slough Foundation. She currently serves on the board of the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA). Judge Villarreal intends to continue serving the community in these important ways.

Judge Villarreal's community work has been recognized in such awards as:

- Lady Justice, Lifetime Achievement Award, Monterey County Women Lawyers' Association;
- 2019 Distinguished Trustee Award from the Community Foundation of Monterey County;
- Opus Christi Award, Monterey Diocese, Catholic Charities;
- Outstanding Farmworker Housing Advocate, Center for Community Advocacy;
- CSU Monterey Bay Fellow Award;

*It is the mission of the Monterey County Superior Court to serve the public in a respectful, courteous and efficient manner promoting trust and confidence in the legal system by providing fair, equal and open access to justice.*

- Outstanding Community Contribution, Monterey County Latino Network;
- Woman for Justice Award, California Latina Political Action Committee;
- National Hispana Leadership Institute Alumna; and
- Ralph Atkinson Civil Liberties Award for the Defense of Migrant Farmworkers, A.C.L.U.

Presiding Judge Culver stated: “Judge Villarreal has been a dedicated, diligent and conscientious colleague, committed to Monterey County. She has been a mentor to many and is well respected for her community service in Monterey County and throughout the state. Judge Villarreal is known for fairness and the respect she offers those appearing in her courtroom. We will miss Judge Villarreal. We will particularly miss her thoughtful leadership and direction in setting the future vision of the Monterey County Superior Court.”

Judge Villarreal characterizes her retirement as a “graduation”. Just as when we graduate from high school or college, we participate in “Commencement”. She is ready to commence a new adventure!

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