HON. PAUL BURDICK

Judge of the Superior Court (Ret.)

Services: Mediations, Arbitrations,
Discovery/Judicial References,
Private Trials, Special Master

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Hon. Paul Burdick (Ret.) is a former Presiding Judge of the Santa Cruz County Superior Court. He is widely regarded as a highly skilled, experienced, and even-handed trial judge. He is recognized by the legal community as an extremely effective mediator due to his extensive experience in case evaluation, both from his judicial perspective and from his many years as a civil litigation practitioner. Additionally, his exceptional people skills serve to further enhance his effectiveness as a mediator.

Judge Burdick was appointed to the bench by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2006. During his 17-year judicial tenure, Judge Burdick primarily served in the Civil Department, with additional assignments in Probate and the Criminal Felony Department. In 2007, Judge Burdick established the Court's innovative judicial mediation program, which replaced mandatory settlement conferences. This program involved two civil departments dedicating a full week each month to conduct judicial mediations in either half-day or full-day sessions. While managing this program, Judge Burdick conducted several hundred mediations, in both civil and probate cases, and successfully resolved over 90% of the cases he mediated.

While serving in the Civil Department, Judge Burdick efficiently managed a direct calendar, handling cases from filing to law and motion, judicial mediation, and trial. He presided over nearly 100 jury trials and scores of bench trials involving every area of civil and probate law. He was also the court’s designated CEQA judge and Complex Litigation judge. In addition to his civil assignment, Judge Burdick handled a direct Felony calendar, conducting well over 100 jury trials involving some of the court's most serious and notorious cases. In his final seven years on the bench, he also served in the Court's Appellate Division.

Judge Burdick was extensively involved in Court leadership throughout most of his judicial career. He held various key positions, including serving as the Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division for five years, Assistant Presiding Judge from 2016 to 2017, and Presiding Judge from 2018 to 2020. During his term as Presiding Judge, he effectively guided the Court through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Working in tandem with court administration, he oversaw the development and implementation of new technology, promulgated and instituted emergency local rules for remote appearances, and developed new court processes and protocols – all requiring the constant collaboration and buy-in from his judicial colleagues and from partners in the legal community.

Prior to his appointment to the bench, Judge Burdick was a trial lawyer in private practice for 27 years specializing in personal injury, insurance coverage, and insurance bad faith litigation. He tried 35 cases to jury verdict throughout California.

Judge Burdick received his B.A. from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and his J.D. from Santa Clara University.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Personal Injury, including Product Liability and Government Tort Liability
- Medical Malpractice
- Insurance Coverage / Insurance Bad Faith
- Real Estate / Breach of Contract / Fraud
- CEQA / Environmental Litigation / Property Development, Planning & Zoning Disputes
- Construction Defect
- Probate / Trust
- Employment / PAGA / Class Actions
- Business / Commercial Disputes

JUDICIAL SERVICE

Superior Court of California, County of Santa Cruz, 2006-2023

- Presiding Judge, 2018-2020
- Assistant Presiding Judge, 2016-2017
- Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division, 2019-2023
- Court Executive Committee Member, 2016-2023
- Designated CEQA and Complex Litigation Judge, 2006-2010 and 2013-2018
- Presided over more than 200 jury trials, both civil and criminal

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Dunlap & Burdick, 1989-2005

- Partner. Civil litigation practice specializing in catastrophic plaintiff's personal injury litigation and insurance bad faith litigation. Recognized annually as "AV/Preeminent" by Martindale-Hubbell, and Northern California "Super Lawyer" by American Law and Politics magazine.

Britton & Jackson, 1979-1989

- Associate/Member. Civil Litigation practice specializing in plaintiff's personal injury litigation.

EDUCATION

- Juris Doctor, University of Santa Clara School of Law, 1979
- Bachelor of Arts, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1975

HONORS

- Resolution of commendation by State Assembly Members Gail Pellerin, Dawn Addis, Robert Rivas, and State Senator John Laird for "the highest level of dedication to justice" and outstanding service to the people of Santa Cruz County and the State of California, May 2023.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- As Presiding Judge and Supervising Criminal Judge, instituted and presided over program for monthly meetings with all County Criminal Justice Partners for collaboration regarding operations in specialty courts, and criminal court programs, policies, and procedures.
- Presided over monthly Bench/Bar luncheon meetings for collaboration on court issues affecting the civil bar while in the Civil assignment.
- Presided annually over high school state mock trial competitions.
- Presenter at MCLE Regional Judicial Forums presented by National Business Institute.