



The California Supreme Court's Newest Member: Patricia Guerrero

On March 28 2022, Justice Patricia Guerrero was sworn in as the newest associate justice on the California Supreme Court.

Associate Justice Guerrero, 50, most recently served on the Fourth District Court of Appeal, Division One, in San Diego. Her nomination to the high court, announced by Governor Gavin Newsom in February, was confirmed with a unanimous vote by the Commission on Judicial Appointments on March 22.

Newsom appointed Guerrero to fill the vacancy left by Associate Justice Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar who resigned his seat in October to head the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The governor said her “wide-ranging experience, integrity, deep respect for the rule of law and lifelong commitment to public service make her a phenomenal candidate to serve as our next California Supreme Court Justice.”

The *Review* will include a more personal profile of Justice Guerrero in our Fall/Winter 2022 issue.

Guerrero brings a broad professional background, and commitment to public service to the high court. “Justice Guerrero learned the value of hard work and helping those in need from an early age, lessons she has carried throughout her life to lift up others and advance equity and inclusion,” Newsom noted when he announced her nomination. “I’m confident that she will continue . . . to ensure that our cherished rights and freedoms are protected for all Californians,” he added.

Guerrero is the court’s first Latina Supreme Court justice and the first from San Diego in almost a century.

Before joining the Court of Appeal in 2017, she was a San Diego County Superior Court judge, serving as supervising judge for the Family Law Division. Before joining the bench, the Stanford Law School graduate was an assistant U.S. attorney and a partner at Latham & Watkins.

Throughout her career she has contributed her time, working to improve the immigration and appellate court system. As an attorney, she assisted clients on a *pro bono* basis in immigration matters and litigated fair housing claims on behalf of vulnerable families. As a judge, Guerrero has served on the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Future of the California Bar Exam, appointed by Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, and she has been active as well in the Chief’s “Judges in the Classroom” civics program.

In announcing her nomination, Governor Newsom also lauded the new justice’s work ethic. A native of the Imperial Valley raised by immigrant parents from Mexico, Justice Guerrero began working in a grocery store at the age of 16 and graduated as co-valedictorian at Imperial High School. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of California, Berkeley before earning her J.D. degree at Stanford Law School.

As an attorney, Justice Guerrero’s prodigious work ethic drew notice as well. At the 2017 hearing to confirm her nomination to the Court of Appeal, a former colleague recalled how Guerrero finished a brief on her way to give birth to her son and coordinated filing the brief hours later. The justice, who is married, has two sons.

When nominated, Guerrero said she would seek to instill confidence in state courts “while honoring the sacrifices of my immigrant parents and demonstrating to young people that anything is possible in our wonderful and diverse country.”

Retired California Supreme Court Justice Carlos R. Moreno called Guerrero’s nomination as the first Latina justice on the high court “a historic move toward creating a more inclusive judiciary that represents all Californians.” The state has one of the nation’s most diverse benches. In 2020, Newsom appointed the first openly gay justice, Martin Jenkins, to the Supreme Court. Although Latinos make up a plurality of the state’s population, they are significantly underrepresented on the California bench; in some counties with large Latino populations there are no sitting Latino judges. ★



Justice Patricia Guerrero hugs her father Jorge Guerrero after being confirmed to the California Supreme Court. *Photos this page: California Courts.*