



Public Information Office
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Committee Begins Workplace Environment Review

SAN FRANCISCO – A special Ninth Circuit committee is actively consulting with current and former law clerks and employees as it seeks to address issues related to the prevention of workplace harassment and fostering of a positive working environment in the federal courts.

Appointed in December by Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas, the Workplace Environment Committee was tasked with reviewing policies and procedures and proposing revisions where necessary to maintain a healthy working environment.

The Committee is chaired by Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown of San Diego and includes Chief District Judge Virginia A. Phillips of the Central District of California in Los Angeles; District Judge Charles R. Breyer of the Northern District of California in San Francisco; Magistrate Judge Candy W. Dale of the District of Idaho in Boise, Idaho; and employment and mediation specialist Abby Silverman, also of San Diego.

In a recent report to the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, Judge McKeown said the Committee has conducted focus groups with current law clerks. It has plans for focus groups for former law clerks and current employees, and has reached out to law school deans for advice. The Committee also is redrafting various law clerk and employee policies and is consulting other organizations on best practices.

Judge McKeown later commented, "The Committee is dedicating substantial time and resources to this endeavor and we anticipate making recommendations for changes in policies and for circuit-wide training."

On February 26, 2018, the Committee sent a confidential questionnaire to about 6,000 current employees and current and former law clerks. The questionnaire seeks suggestions on circuit policies, training, and programs to address harassment prevention and improve the workplace environment. Comments may be submitted anonymously. Former Ninth Circuit clerks or employees who did not receive the questionnaire but want to participate, should contact the Committee at: ninth_circuit_workplace_policies_committee@ce9.uscourts.gov.

The Committee is also coordinating with the federal judiciary's Workplace Conduct Working Group, which was appointed by Chief Justice Roberts.

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