



Public Information Office
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit
Office of the Circuit Executive · 95 7th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 · (415) 355-8800 · (415) 355-8901 Fax

NEWS RELEASE

July 20, 2018

Contact: David Madden (415) 355-8800

Stephen M. Liacouras Named Chief Circuit Mediator for Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals

SAN FRANCISCO – Attorney Stephen M. Liacouras has been chosen as the next chief circuit mediator of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The appointment, which is effective August 1, 2018, was announced today by Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas.

Mr. Liacouras, who has worked as a circuit mediator since 2001, will succeed Claudia L. Bernard, who has served as chief circuit mediator since 2007. Ms. Bernard is retiring after 29 years as a circuit mediator.

“The Ninth Circuit is extremely fortunate to have such highly capable professionals in the Circuit Mediation Office,” Chief Judge Thomas said. “Claudia has done an outstanding job for our court and Stephen is well prepared to assume this important leadership role.”

Mr. Liacouras has spent most of his career in public service. He joined the staff of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1995 as a motions attorney and was promoted to supervising civil research attorney in 1997. After leaving the court in late 1999 to work as an in-house attorney for a technology company in Texas, he returned to the Ninth Circuit in January 2001 to become a circuit mediator.

In nearly 18 years as a mediator, Mr. Liacouras has successfully resolved more than 1,000 appellate cases involving insurance, civil rights, tribal, ERISA, bankruptcy, contract, employment, tax, immigration and environmental matters. He also mediated trial court cases during a judicial emergency in the District of Arizona and as a mediation panel volunteer in the Northern District of California.

Mr. Liacouras is actively involved in court outreach to educate the legal bar on the mediation program, helps plan national workshops for circuit mediators, and conducts training for court staff on communication skills.

– more –

“I have the greatest respect for the judiciary as an institution and am deeply honored to have been selected to serve as chief circuit mediator for the Ninth Circuit,” Mr. Liacouras said. “I look forward to working with our talented mediation team as it continues to serve the interests of the parties, the court and the circuit.”

Born in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, Mr. Liacouras received his B.A. in 1986 from the University of California, Berkeley, graduating with highest distinction and Phi Beta Kappa. He received his J.D. in 1990 from Yale Law School. He served as a law clerk to Chief Judge Dolores Sloviter of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit from 1990 to 1991. From 1991 to 1995, he worked as an associate attorney with the San Francisco law firm of Rosen, Bien, Galvan & Grunfeld (formerly Rosen, Bien & Asaro).

As chief circuit mediator, Mr. Liacouras will oversee a staff of seven mediators and five support staff. Each year, the unit resolves about 1,200 cases which would have otherwise gone through the adjudicative process, thus reducing the workload burden on judges in the nation’s busiest appellate court. Settling a case through mediation also allows the parties to achieve a finality that is often not possible through adjudication, which may result in reversal or remand for further proceedings. Complete resolution through settlement thus saves work for the district courts and administrative agencies. In addition, mediators can bring non-parties to the table to effect a global settlement of all issues related to a controversy.

Mediators also assist in organizing and managing complex and voluminous related appeals. For example, hundreds of administrative petitions for review were filed challenging decisions of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission during the California energy crisis. The Circuit Mediation Office organized the presentation of the petitions to the assigned oral argument panel in a way that would maximize the possibility of settlement. Over a decade, these settlement efforts have resulted in refunds of \$8.6 billion.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals hears appeals of cases decided by executive branch agencies and federal trial courts in nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions. The court normally meets monthly in Seattle, Washington; San Francisco, California; and Pasadena, California; every other month in Portland, Oregon; three times per year in Honolulu, Hawaii; and twice a year in Anchorage, Alaska.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit had 11,096 new case filings in fiscal year 2017. The court is authorized 29 judgeships and currently has six vacancies and one future vacancy.

###