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## Message From the Office of Workplace Relations Team


In the [last edition of this newsletter](#), the Office of Workplace Relations (OWR) introduced two new team members, Mary (director of OWR) and Anjuli (deputy director of OWR). Since then, we have welcomed Ashley Banks, who previously worked for the Office of Staff Attorneys, to the OWR team. She joins Mary, Anjuli, Stella and Amrita. To learn more about us, you can explore our intranet page [here](#).

We are excited to continue this new chapter with a focus on trainings and additional resources for all of the courts and offices within the Ninth Circuit. Our office serves and supports all employees and judges of the courts (appellate, district and bankruptcy), probation and pretrial services offices, and federal public defender organizations of the Ninth Circuit by promoting respectful, inclusive and fair workplaces.



*The full Office of Workplace Relations team meeting in person for the first time.*

OWR's work is fundamental to the effective and expeditious administration of justice and public confidence in the judiciary.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us for support! 

# Q&A with Ashley Banks



Ashley joined the Office of Workplace Relations team in January 2024 as attorney advisor. Her focus is development and coordination of training and resources.

## 1. Why did you decide to join the OWR team?

I'm a huge supporter of positive workplaces. I started my legal career in labor law, and I understand the connection between a safe and positive working environment and employee satisfaction and success, increased employer productivity and overall better results for everyone. Within the Ninth Circuit, OWR provides a hub for brainstorming and encouraging best practices that can contribute to positive experiences for all employees, leaders and judges. It was really exciting for me to join OWR as it is expanding its capacity and offering more proactive support for judicial court units. My role involves planning and supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts and developing workplace-related trainings and resources for all of the judicial court units and FPD offices in the Ninth Circuit. It's great to work on issues that I care about with a wonderful team of dedicated people!

## 2. What is a typical day like for you?

Every day looks a little different. Several days a week, I meet with offices and court units to discuss their training needs. Often, these consultations are a time to discuss the unique dynamics and circumstances of each office, introduce the offerings of the Office of Workplace Relations, evaluate opportunities for improvement, and brainstorm ideas for training and resources that are responsive to the office's needs.

I engage in a fair amount of research to stay abreast of best practices, emerging trends, and industry norms in workplace relations and employment-related matters, as well as teaching and training methods for effective sharing of information. And then, I compile and develop the resources. Sometimes that's putting together a deck, talking points, questions for a Q&A, emails; it could be anything!

In addition to preparing the resources, I lead trainings and conversations. I love connecting with so many people throughout the circuit!

## 3. What has surprised you most about this job so far?

I have really enjoyed seeing that so many offices are interested in innovative ideas to improve their workplaces. There's a lot of excitement and interest in additional support, so I don't have to do a lot of convincing of others about the importance of these additional resources that OWR can now provide.

### 4. How would you describe your career path?

Interesting! I spent about seven years at the National Labor Relations Board. I investigated and litigated unfair labor practice cases in the southeast. I worked with so many brilliant attorneys and investigators, and I was able to engage in substantive trial work very early in my career. When I moved to the Bay Area, I joined the Office of Staff Attorneys. I had the opportunity to work on so many varied and fascinating legal issues and present recommendations to Ninth Circuit judges. I've always been connected with labor and employment; about a year and a half ago, I started teaching "Introduction to Labor Law" in Tulane Law School's Master of Jurisprudence Program in Labor and Employment.

### 5. What is the best work advice that you have received?

I had a mentor tell me that you have to be the most prepared person in the room, and then believe that you are the most prepared person in the room. This was not meant in an overly-confident way, but he explained that when you're prepared, you can be more flexible and adaptable, and better respond to any issues that come up. And when you believe in your preparation, and yourself, you can truly rely on yourself to do your best. This advice was related to trial work, but I think it applies pretty generally.

I also learned from one of my first legal mentors that you have to develop a means to separate work from the rest of your day. This mentor had a practice of inviting all of her interns to a yoga class after we led our first client intake day. This invitation was less about going to yoga, and more about finding a way to create some distance between the heaviness and potential trauma of the legal work and our personal time. This mentor was so invested in her clients and her work, and she showed me that it's important to care deeply about your work, but that you also have to care deeply about yourself.

### 6. Bonus! What are you:

- Reading: I'm currently reading "Chain Gang All-Stars" by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah. I saw Adjei-Brenyah speak at the first Oakland Arts and Lectures a few months ago!
- Watching: "Abbott Elementary," "Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates," and "The Greatest Night in Pop." So many of these musicians played such a big part in my childhood, so it was interesting to learn the back story of the writing and recording of the song, "We are the World."
- Listening to: Podcasts—"What Now with Trevor Noah," and "The Assignment with Audie Cornish"; Music—This weekend I was listening to Alice Coltrane's "The Carnegie Hall Concert." Starting on March 29—Beyonce's "Renaissance: Act II." 🎧

# 2024 Workplace Environment Survey

In February, Chief Judge Mary H. Murguia and the Workplace Environment Committee invited all Ninth Circuit employees to participate in the 2024 Workplace Environment Survey, a voluntary, anonymous survey designed to capture information about employees' work experience circuit-wide. Periodic climate surveys are one of the Workplace Environment Committee's initiatives to solicit input from all employees on how well the circuit is meeting its goals of providing a positive and healthy environment. Employees were asked to share feedback about their overall workplace satisfaction, how workplace issues are addressed, and

whether they feel employees are treated fairly and equitably. The Office of Workplace Relations receives all responses to ensure the confidentiality of respondents' identities and identifying information.

After the 2022 Ninth Circuit Workplace Environment Survey, the circuit used the results to guide development of more resources to continue to improve our workplaces. (You can learn more about the 2022 results [here](#).) OWR's analysis of the 2024 survey results is underway, and it is expected that results will continue to inform priorities and resource development. ✓



## Employee/Office Recognition

The Office of Workplace Relations will begin spotlighting employees and/or offices whose actions have contributed to a healthy and positive work environment.

If you'd like to nominate an office or an individual for their contribution to a healthy and positive work environment, please send an email to OWR at [workplacedirector@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:workplacedirector@ce9.uscourts.gov) with the name, court unit or office, and why OWR should recognize that office or individual. ✓

**training  
opportunities**



# Training Opportunities

The Office of Workplace Relations supports all employees and judges with training! **To coordinate an OWR training or conference presentation, please contact Ashley Banks to schedule a consultation at [ashley\\_banks@ca9.uscourts.gov](mailto:ashley_banks@ca9.uscourts.gov).** Here is a non-exhaustive list of trainings and programs that OWR can provide to your court unit, office, or chambers:

- Employment Dispute Resolution Policy Compliance
- Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Leadership and Management
- Best Practices for Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Onboarding Employees
- Effective Communication
- Inclusive Practices
- Managing Bias
- Recognizing and Avoiding Microaggressions
- Allyship and Bystander Intervention
- Special Emphasis Month Observations

## Recent OWR Program Offerings

- 2024 Central District of California Annual Judge Conference – **March 22**
- Central District of California—U.S. District Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, and Probation and Pretrial Services Supervisors – **March 21**
- 2024 Ninth Circuit Symposium – **April 17**
- District of Hawaii, Office of the Federal Public Defender – **April 22**
- 2024 Ninth Circuit Chief and Deputy Chief Conference, Probation and Pretrial Services – **April 23**
- District of Hawaii, U.S. District Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, and Probation and Pretrial Services – **April 24-25**

## OWR is coming to an office near you!

- Central District of California Chambers – **May 17**
- New Judges Orientation – **May 30**
- Office of Staff Attorneys – **June 14**
- Western District of Washington, Office of the Federal Public Defender – **July 9-10**
- Probation and Pretrial Services Offices DEI Conference – **July 15-17**
- Ninth Circuit Chief Deputies Conference – **July 15**
- 2024 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference – **July 21-25**
- Ninth Circuit Librarians Conference – **July 30**
- District of Nevada – **July 16, August 20**
- Southern District of California, U.S. Probation Office – **August 27-29**

## Highlighted Offerings from the AO and FJC

- In Session: Leading the Judiciary – [Why Microstress Matters](#)
- Court to Court: [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- Judiciary Online University: [Becoming an Accountable Professional](#)
- Human Resources Benefits: [Benefit for Life](#)



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