



Eleven Dupont Circle NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
www.afj.org | 202-822-6070

Field Offices
Dallas | Houston | Los Angeles |
San Francisco

PRESIDENT
RAKIM BROOKS

CHAIR
PAULETTE MEYER

March 4, 2024

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Chairman Durbin:

On behalf of the Alliance for Justice, a national association representing more than 150 diverse organizations united in our commitment to justice, I write to express our support for the confirmation of Dena Coggins to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California. When confirmed, Judge Coggins will be the first Black woman to serve as a federal judge in the Eastern District of California. Moreover, she will join a select group of federal judges who bring valuable experience from their prior roles as administrative law judges, further enriching the judiciary with her unique and well-rounded perspective.

A graduate of California State University and the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, Coggins began her legal career in 2007 as a litigation association at Morrison & Foerster LLP before joining Downey Brand LLP in 2012. As an associate, Coggins skillfully maneuvered through a myriad of legal landscapes, showcasing her versatility in litigation. Her experience encompassed a wide array of legal domains, including securities, insurance, probate, family law, immigration, and consumer class action. From drafting pleadings to actively participating in discovery processes, motions practice, trials, settlement conferences, and arbitration proceedings, Judge Coggins demonstrated unwavering proficiency across the entire litigation spectrum.

From 2015 to 2017 and then again from 2018 to 2021, Coggins dedicated herself to the State of California, Office of Administrative Hearings, leaving an indelible mark in both the Special Education Division and the General Jurisdiction Division. As an administrative law judge within this quasi-judicial tribunal handling over 1,500 state and local government agency cases, she presided over administrative hearings, rendering carefully considered written final and proposed decisions.

Since assuming the role of a Superior Court Judge at the Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento in 2021, Coggins has continued her impactful journey in the legal realm. Initially assigned to the Criminal Division, she adeptly presided over preliminary hearings and the mental health calendar. She was later assigned to the Juvenile Court, hearing cases under California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 300 and 602. In this critical role, Coggins undertakes the delicate responsibility of adjudicating cases involving allegations of child abuse and neglect brought against parents by the Sacramento County

Department of Child, Family, and Adult Services. Her judicious orders reflect a compassionate and thoughtful approach, addressing matters such as detaining and removing children from their parents' custody when there is a substantial risk to their physical or emotional safety. She also plays a pivotal role in ordering family reunification services to equip parents with the necessary tools for overcoming the issues that led to removal.

While the focal point of Coggins's illustrious career lies in her unwavering commitment to public service, it's imperative to highlight the impactful strides she took during her private practice days. In this period, she dedicated her legal expertise to representing pro bono clients, notably in immigration court and probate court, where she skillfully navigated the intricacies of a trust dispute.

Moreover, her benevolence extended to the McCullum Youth Court within the Alameda County Superior Court, where she actively participated in a diversion and restorative justice program. This initiative specifically catered to nonviolent youth offenders on the brink of entering the juvenile justice system, underscoring Judge Coggins's dedication to community well-being and rehabilitation. Coggins also took on a mentoring role at the Anthony M. Kennedy American Inn of Court, providing guidance and support to aspiring legal minds at various stages of their educational journey – from elementary and high school to college and law school, which further showcases her commitment to the values and ethics of the legal profession.

Given her remarkable qualifications, we urge your office to ensure the Senate confirms Dena M. Coggins to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California as soon as possible. Her diverse background makes her an excellent candidate well-suited to join the federal bench.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rakim H.D. Brooks".

Rakim Brooks
President, Alliance for Justice