



Michelle Court

NOMINEE

Nominee to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California

COURT

District Court

DATE NOMINATED

April 24, 2024

On April 24, 2024, President Biden [nominated](#) Judge Michelle Williams Court to the United States District Court for the Central District of California. Court currently serves as a Supervising Judge of the Civil Division for the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles.

Biography

Michelle Williams Court was born in 1966 in Great Falls, Montana. She earned her B.A from Pomona College in 1988 and her J.D. from Loyola Law School in 1993.

Legal Experience

After law school, Court worked as an associate at Gilbert, Kelly, Crowley & Jennett. As an associate, Court represented defendants in automobile accident cases where the defendant's insurance carrier suspected insurance fraud. During this time, she was deeply involved in pre-trial discovery, case management, and motion practice. She then took on a project attorney role with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California from 1994 to 1995. Here, she contributed significantly to cases involving Native American rights and workplace disputes, taking and defending depositions and supporting trials as second chair. Transitioning to Litt & Marquez from 1995 to 1999, Court tackled a range of responsibilities, from litigation and settlements to trials and appeals, specifically focusing on multi-plaintiff and class action employment and housing cases.

From 1999 to 2000, Court served as a Community Builder Fellow, Civil Rights Specialist at the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development, a prestigious role among just five other nationwide fellows. She contributed to Fair Housing Act policy and enforcement initiatives as part of the HUD/Harvard University Kennedy School of Government Community Builder Fellowship, protecting individuals' housing rights and supporting community development programs. The following year, from 2000 to 2002, Court advanced her career as a senior associate at Milberg Weiss Bershad Hynes & Lerach. Here, she focused on pretrial litigation in consumer and civil rights class actions, addressing unfair business practices such as insurance discrimination, employment discrimination, and mortgage lending fraud.

From 2002 to 2012, Court held various leadership roles at Bet Tzedek Legal Services, a top-tier organization and nonprofit law firm specializing in poverty law. Beginning as Deputy Director of Litigation and advancing to Director of Litigation, interim CEO, and eventually Vice President and General Counsel, she oversaw a team of over 30 staff attorneys and advocates. Her responsibilities included directing legal operations, supervising human resources and pro bono departments and collaborating with the President/CEO to execute the organization's strategic vision.

Judicial Experience

Since February 2012, Court has been a judge for the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles. Initially presiding over a family law calendar from February 2012 to July 2015, she later transitioned to a civil calendar, where she served until December 2022. From January 2021 to December 2022, she also served as an Assistant Supervising Judge of the Civil Division. Since December 2022, Court has served as the Supervising Judge of the Civil Division. In this capacity, she oversees the management and administration of the civil division and its approximately 135 judges and commissioners, demonstrating her continued commitment to judicial excellence.

The following cases are representative of Court's judicial career:

1. **Dov. Raytheon Co., No. BC603539** (L.A. Cnty. Super. Ct. 2018), *aff'd*, No. B293950, 2020 WL 6305009 (Cal. Ct. App. Oct. 27, 2020).

This case involved allegations of sexual orientation discrimination and harassment, as well as failure to accommodate resulting stress and post-traumatic stress disorder. Throughout this matter, Judge Court demonstrated exceptional diligence and judicial acumen. The complexity of the facts presented to the jury required her to meticulously craft jury instructions, ensuring fairness in adjudicating the plaintiff's claims against both individual and entity defendants. Before the trial commenced, Judge Court handled several crucial discovery motions, including those pertaining to electronically stored information, issue sanctions, and summary judgment. Throughout the trial, she maintained a fair and impartial stance, ultimately presiding over the jury's decision, which favored the entity and individual defendants on discrimination and harassment claims but held the entity liable for failure to reasonably accommodate and engage in the interactive process. Despite subsequent motions from the defendants, including a motion for a new trial and judgment notwithstanding the verdict, Judge Court stood firm in her rulings. The Court of Appeal's affirmation of the verdict further attested to the soundness of her decisions and judicial expertise.

2. **Valles v. Kim, Nos.** (L.A. Cnty. Super. Ct. 2018), *aff'd*, No. B296274, 2020 WL 5088021 (Cal. Ct. App. Aug. 28, 2020). *Decision supplied.*

This case, which Judge Court oversaw, arose from a disagreement over an exclusive parking easement, where plaintiffs sought quiet title and cancellation of a deed. The dispute centered on Lot B, which plaintiffs leased for employee parking alongside their manufacturing business on Lot A. Over the years, changes in Lot B's ownership included an exclusive parking easement in favor of plaintiffs. However, since 2003, plaintiffs

utilized Lot B beyond the easement's scope without permission. Upon examining evidence spanning decades and a complex chain of title, Judge Court determined that plaintiffs' use of Lot B met the criteria for adverse possession. This ruling granted plaintiffs an ownership interest in Lot B. The Court of Appeal subsequently upheld this decision, validating Judge Court's careful consideration of the case's intricacies and adherence to legal principles.

3. ***Anaya v. Superior Indus. Conveyors, Inc., No. BC594187*** (L.A. Cnty. Super. Ct. 2018), *aff'd sub nom. Anaya v. General Equipment & Supplies, Inc., No. B291274 (consolidated with B292138) 2019 WL 4945729* (Cal. Ct. App. Oct. 8, 2019).

In this matter, Judge Court presided over a product liability/wrongful death case brought by the family of a man who tragically lost his life in an industrial accident involving a rock crushing machine. Initially, multiple defendants were sued, but only the distributor defendant remained by the trial's conclusion. Before the trial commenced, Judge Court handled and dismissed two motions for summary judgment, addressed a motion for good faith settlement, and oversaw hearings to approve settlements with the decedent's children. The jury ultimately awarded the plaintiffs a \$30 million verdict, a decision that was later upheld by the Court of Appeal.

Professional Activities and Accolades

Throughout her legal career, Judge Court has demonstrated an extensive commitment to mentoring and supporting aspiring legal professionals through various moot court programs and competitions. She collaborated with Loyola Law School to oversee trials for at-risk high school students and participated in mock trials in partnership with the Los Angeles Superior Court and the Constitutional Rights Foundation. Recently, she served as a judge for the prestigious Greene Broillet & Wheeler National Civil Trial Competition, affirming her commitment to fostering excellence in litigation skills among law students.

Judge Court has been a dedicated member of the Los Angeles Law Library's Board of Trustees since 2013. This esteemed institution, the second largest public law library in the U.S., prioritizes serving both the public and the legal community, with a particular focus on assisting self-represented litigants. She actively engages in various mentoring initiatives, mock trial programs, and community outreach efforts such as Teen Court and the Power Lunch Program, which introduces high school students to legal careers. Additionally, she contributes to the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Dialogues on Freedom, showcasing her commitment to legal education and community service.