



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

PRESS RELEASE

TO: ALL INFORMATION MEDIA – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: Arthur A. Garcia, Presiding Judge
Contact Number 614-6433

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Superior Court Executive Officer Gary M. Blair to Retire

Santa Barbara County Superior Court Presiding Judge, Arthur A. Garcia, announced the pending retirement of Gary M. Blair, Court Executive Officer, after 37 years of dedicated public service. “Mr. Blair has faithfully served the Court and this Community in a distinguished career of Public Service,” said Garcia.

Mr. Blair began his career in 1976 with the Santa Barbara County District Attorney’s Office and was the founding Director of the Victim-Witness Assistance program. In 1979, Mr. Blair was appointed by the Superior Court Judges as the Executive Officer of the countywide Superior Court. He is the longest serving Court Executive Officer amongst the 58 County Superior Courts in the State of California.

During his career, Mr. Blair has administered the Santa Barbara County Superior Court when it consisted of only 10 Judges with 35 employees to a Court that presently consists of 24 Judicial Officers and over 250 budgeted positions. He oversaw the courts’ administration during the 1998 historic unification of the Justice, Municipal and Superior Courts of Santa Barbara County and implemented such landmark legislation as the Lockyer-Isenberg Trial Court Funding Act which brought the first statewide funding to the Courts.

He successfully transferred the once separate Courts of Santa Barbara County from a legacy mainframe computing system onto a court-wide case management system. He recently embarked upon a project to introduce electronic filing and document management of the Court’s records.

Mr. Blair's innovative approach to court administration resulted in the California Judicial Council, chaired by Supreme Court Chief Justice Ronald George, granting the Santa Barbara Superior Court the prestigious *Ralph N. Kleps* award for creating a special website which managed all court documents and media information related to the Michael Jackson high profile criminal case in 2004. This unique website ultimately experienced several million inquiries by the public and the media from 43 countries.

Mr. Blair oversaw the construction of new jury assembly buildings in downtown Santa Barbara and Santa Maria as well as a new juvenile court facility in Santa Barbara. He also secured the necessary funding for the construction of a new Juvenile Court, and for a new Superior Court Clerk's Office Building in Santa Maria, which was just completed.

Another significant highlight of Mr. Blair's career included the planning and hosting of a special 3-day session in 2006 of the California Supreme Court in the Mural Room of the Historic Santa Barbara Courthouse. This provided the rare educational opportunity for over 900 Santa Barbara County High School students to observe the Supreme Court conducting oral arguments.

Assistant Presiding Judge, James Herman, called Blair's career with the court "exemplary" lauding his contributions to the justice community as outstanding and thanking him for his contributions to the Court and citizens of Santa Barbara County.

Mr. Blair looks forward to enjoying more time with his wife, Ana, and his twin daughters, Amanda and Mikayla, in retirement.

A retirement event is planned for the evening of Friday, July 19, 2013 at the El Paseo Restaurant in Santa Barbara.

"The Court will announce a successor to Mr. Blair in the coming weeks," said Garcia.