

More Women Being Appointed to Bench Than Men—Brown

More than half of the judicial appointments last year were women, Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. said yesterday in his annual report on applicant and appointee data. From the period of 2011 through 2017, Brown said, he appointed 451 judges, including 95 last year. There were more than 2,400 applications, he related.

Over the seven years, nearly 40 percent of those appointed identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African-American; Hispanic; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; or Other/Unknown, Brown reported.

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<http://www.metnews.com/articles/2018/morewomen030218.htm>

The Press Democrat

Sonoma County changes policy to proactively clear past pot-related convictions

Sonoma County District Attorney Jill Ravitch abruptly changed course Monday, deciding her office will begin reviewing past marijuana-related crimes to reduce or expunge eligible convictions after saying last month it would not.

The policy shift was issued late Monday afternoon after what she said was further consideration related to the 75 or so petitions the office had already received from people seeking to dismiss a conviction, or to have a felony dropped to a misdemeanor. The chance at reclassifying these crimes was part of Proposition 64, which voters passed in 2016 to legalize recreational cannabis for adults 21 years old and up.

Ravitch, who is running for re-election this year, said in February her office would not follow the lead of other California counties, including San Francisco and San Diego, in proactively evaluating old cases. At that time, she stated her 50-attorney department did not have the resources to research an estimated 3,000 prior convictions, but would, instead, review individual petitions as they were filed.

“What I kept hearing is so many people would not go through that process, either because they didn’t understand it or they didn’t have the money, or

they just didn't have the wherewithal to follow through," Ravitch said. "It's still a resource issue, but we've juggled our resources and are doing what we can to make this a more seamless process."

The two-page petition process was designed so a person could complete it without a lawyer, and there was no fee for submission. While someone with a misdemeanor could petition to have the case dismissed and then request their record be expunged, a person with a felony could have benefited from additional legal review.

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Full Article Here: <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/8077960-181/sonoma-county-changes-policy-to>

Daily Journal

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Brown made progress, but there's still work to do

The numbers show that this governor has made significant progress. But while well represented in the California Supreme Court, there are only two API justices of the Courts of Appeal out of the 93 appellate justices.

I sincerely appreciate the illuminating focus on increasing diversity on the bench in the March 2 article, "Brown's judge picks made bench more diverse." I am the president of the California Asian Pacific American Bar Association (Cal-APABA), which represents the interests of the state's 14,000-plus Asian-American and Pacific Islander (API) attorneys. Cal-APABA and other coalitions of API bar associations across the state pay close attention to this important issue. I suggest, however, that the title of the online version of the article -- "As his tenure ends, Brown's judicial picks have small impact on bench diversity" -- is not consonant with the progress made by this governor or his judicial appointments advisor Joshua Groban.

The data shows that during his term, from 2011 through 2017, nearly 40 percent of Gov. Jerry Brown's appointees identified themselves as persons of color. Last year, over 50 percent of appointees were women. We should give credit where credit is due, and this governor has shown a commitment to appoint well qualified and diverse judges.

The lack of representation has a long history, and the blame cannot fall on the shoulders of just one governor. Both California's bench and bar have a long, sad history of discriminating against APIs. The California Supreme Court in 1854 in *People v. Hall*, denied the right of Chinese Americans to testify against white Americans. In 1911, Sei Fujii graduated from the University of Southern California Law School, but was denied a law license because of his Asian ethnicity. A 2017 study commissioned by the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) and Yale Law School showed that while APIs have penetrated virtually every sector of the legal profession, they continue to be significantly underrepresented in the leadership ranks of law firms, government, and academia.

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