



ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER

OFFICERS

President

THOMAS S. DILLARD
Judicate West
1851 E. First Street
Suite 1600
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(949) 510-6218
tdillard@judicatewest.com

President-Elect

ROBERT B. GIBSON
Gibson & Hughes
1551 N. Tustin Avenue
Suite 530
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(714) 547-8377
rgibson@gibsonhugheslaw.com

Treasurer

HON. LINDA S. MARKS
Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701
(657) 622-5207
lmarks@occourts.org

Secretary

MICHAEL J. STRICKROTH
Kutak Rock LLP
5 Park Plaza
Suite 1500
Irvine, CA 92614-8595
(949) 417-0999
Michael.Strickroth@KutakRock.com

Membership Chair

HON. PETER J. POLOS (RET.)
Panish, Shea, Boyle, LLP
11111 Santa Monica Blvd.
Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(310) 477-1600
polos@psblaw.com

Member At Large

HON. NANCY E. ZELTZER
Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701
(657) 622-5252
nzeltzer@occourts.org

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Dear Editor:

The American Board of Trial Advocates is comprised of civil lawyers, who represent businesses, insurers and individuals involved in disputes. The Orange County Chapter of ABOTA is made up of over 200 of the best lawyers in Orange County, with a focus on support for the jury trial in civil matters and judicial civility. OC ABOTA is made up of conservatives and liberals, Republicans, Democrats and those who decline to state a political preference. Although our political views are diverse, our concerns about political attacks on our OC Judiciary are not.

Recently two judges in Orange County have come under attack for decisions they have made in their capacity as Judges of the Superior Court. Judge Thomas Goethals was attacked for removing the District Attorney's Office from the prosecution of a murder case with multiple victims. Judge M. Marc Kelly was attacked for agreeing with a probation office sentencing report and the mother of both the victim and the perpetrator to reject a sentence of 25 years to life and impose a lesser sentence. Each of these respected local jurists have weathered vicious attacks and recall assertions from groups, including those outside of our County.

The Orange County judiciary is under attack. Judicial independence is under attack. We in the OC Chapter of ABOTA reject the politicization of our courts and reject attempts to intimidate our judges into foregoing their obligation to use their best judgment, devoid of influence, in fairly ruling.

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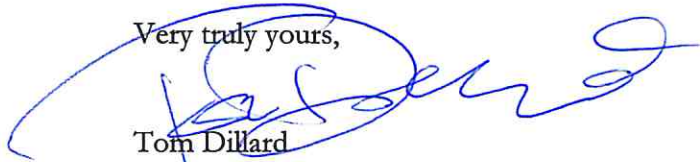
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Whether you agree with these isolated decisions or do not, political influence on our Courts is a bad thing. In 1776, the Royal Courts in America were subject to the whims of the Crown, meaning that the British subjects in America did not have fair access to the Courts for relief. The courts were politicized then and the issue is whether we will allow our courts to fall into the same level of unfair influence. Judicial independence is threatened when recall is suggested as a response to an unpopular decision. Even a decision with which you disagree is not grounds for a recall. As Americans, we are entitled and should always expect a fair hearing in our Courts. Perfection or politically correct decisions are not the standard nor are they always desired.

Politics have no place in our Courts. Likewise the use of recall petitions, Supervisors' votes or other grandstanding have no place in a civil society. Judicial independence protects us all. Political attacks on such independence endanger our courts and our freedoms
Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Very truly yours,



Tom Dillard
President, Orange County Chapter of ABOTA