

Nomination of Chief Administrative Law Judge Karen Clopton

We are pleased to nominate the California Public Utilities Commission's Chief Administrative Law Judge Karen Valentia Clopton for the ABA's Robert B. Yegge Award for Outstanding Contribution in the Field of Judicial Administration for her lifetime of tireless work ensuring the fair and equitable administration of justice. She originally joined the ABA in 1983 and rejoined in 2013 and currently belongs to the Judicial Division Lawyers Conference. She has championed diversity, equity, inclusion, and equal access in the legal profession and beyond throughout her career.

Chief Judge Clopton manages 40 judges and over 35 support staff and manages the Commission agenda and submission of proposed decisions for discussion and adoption by the Commission. At the outset of her tenure in January 2009 she was charged with a "Soup to Nuts" review of the CPUC's decision-making process. As the first African American Chief Judge, she is not only an excellent role model for students and attorneys of color, but she has made the elimination of bias and outreach to diverse backgrounds a cornerstone of her management of the Division. As a result, under her leadership she has hired the first Filipino judge, the first Native American judge, the first Hispanic judge, the first Nigerian judge, several LGBT and Asian and African American judges, in addition to promoting African American judges to the role of Assistant Chief Administrative law judge. She has effectively recruited, trained, and promoted several judges during her tenure, improved the overall quality of the judicial professional development and training program, and effectively and efficiently met all statutory mandates for the administration of the CPUC's formal proceedings.

General Counsel and Legal Management Expertise

She served as the CPUC's Interim General Counsel 2014-15, managing over 70 attorneys and 20 legal support staff and implementing best management practices in the Legal Division. During this period the CPUC was under intense scrutiny by the public, the legislature, and its employees. She helped to achieve excellence and integrity during her tenure that continues to resonate. She has over 25 years of leadership, managerial, and budgetary experience. Appointed in 2007 by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as the General Counsel for the California Department of Corporations, she oversaw all litigation counsel, both in house and outside; and served as liaison with the Governor's legal staff and other governmental agencies, addressing predatory lending, payday loans, franchising, and mortgages.

Recruited in 2002 to be the first Chief of Operations and Corporate Counsel for the San Francisco State University Foundation, Inc., she successfully chaired the University's 42-member Task Force on Intergroup Relations with its initial focus on the relationship of the Palestinian and Jewish communities to universal plaudits. Her important work at the University can be accessed at www.sfsu.edu/~ohr/noindex/finalreport.html.

Recognized Scholar, Lecturer, and Author

Chief Judge Clopton is an accomplished author and lecturer on ethics, professional responsibility, and corporate governance; regulatory practices and procedures; workplace diversity and discrimination issues, sexual harassment prevention and investigation policies; and alcohol and substance abuse policies. She is Past President of the San Francisco League of

Women Voters (2007-11). She is a proud graduate of Vassar College cum laude and Antioch University School of Law (America's premier clinical legal education program now University of the District of Columbia's Clarke Law School, an HBCU). Judge Clopton was awarded the highly competitive Maguire Fellowship by Vassar College for post-graduate study in international and comparative labor-management relations in London, England and Geneva, Switzerland. She has earned certificates in administrative law and fair hearings; Management Techniques for Presiding Judges; and Judicial Ethics for Administrative Law Judges from the National Judicial College. Judge Clopton serves on the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' Administrative Law Judge Subcommittee.

Award Winner

Chief Judge Clopton received the 2013 Silver SPUR Lifetime Achievement Award from the nationally preeminent urban planning and research organization, SPUR, and was recognized for this honor by the Congress, the California State Senate, San Francisco's Mayor and Board of Supervisors for promoting integrity, transparency, and public access in government. She received the 2011 Trailblazer Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, San Francisco Chapter. She also received the 2011 History Maker Award for the March into National Women's History Month, "Celebrating the Contributions of Powerful Women of the Bay." In 2012, Chief Judge Clopton was awarded the California Association of Black Lawyers' Judicial Award of Excellence in recognition of her exemplary and dedicated service.

Bar Leader

Chief Judge Clopton is a leader in the State Bar of California. She serves on the Editorial Board of the California Labor and Employment Law Review and was on the State Bar's Labor and Employment Law Section's Executive Committee from 2000-2010, serving in leadership positions throughout her tenure, including as Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Appointed by the State Bar of California's Board of Trustees to Chair the Council on Access and Fairness, Judge Clopton was also appointed to the Commission for the Revision of the Rules of Professional Conduct for California attorneys for 2015-17 (see her article at <http://www.dailyjournal.com/prmo/PrmoEthicsEmail.cfm?publication=ETHICS&eid=956196&code=JDmiLKHg>) She also served on the State Bar of California's Task Force on Admissions Regulation Reform Implementation from 2013-14.

Chief Judge Clopton has been fearless in her advocacy for the elimination of bias in the legal profession, the diversification of the administrative judiciary as well as the judicial branch of government, and access, fairness, equity and inclusion in all aspects of judicial administration. We are very fortunate to have her energy and voice in our conference at this time. Recognizing her with this important award solidifies the ABA and the Conference's commitment to diversity and inclusion.