



Contact: Angela Braun
Telephone: 805-614-6636
Email: CtAdmin@sbcourts.org
Website: www.santabarbara.courts.ca.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 2026

SUPERIOR COURT JUDGES ELECT STEPHEN DUNKLE AS ASSISTANT PRESIDING JUDGE

Santa Barbara, California, August 25, 2026 – The Judges of the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Barbara elected Judge Stephen Dunkle as their incoming Assistant Presiding Judge for the term beginning January 1, 2027, and concluding December 31, 2028. The nomination and unanimous vote took place at a countywide judges’ meeting on Monday, August 24, 2026.

Current Presiding Judge Kelly said, *“Judge Dunkle is an outstanding choice to serve as our next Assistant Presiding Judge. He is conscientious, hardworking, collegial, and deeply committed to the highest standards of ethics and professionalism. His sound judgment, excellent temperament, and ability to work collaboratively with his colleagues will serve our court extremely well. I am confident that he will do an exceptional job in this important leadership role, and I look forward to working with him in the coming year.”*

Judge Dunkle was appointed to the bench by Governor Newsom in December of 2023. He currently presides over a criminal trial court in the North County Santa Maria Division.

Judge Von Deroian, currently serving as Assistant Presiding Judge, will begin her term as Presiding Judge on January 1, 2027, when Judge Dunkle undertakes the position as Assistant Presiding Judge. Upon announcing Judge Dunkle’s election, Judge Deroian remarked, *“I look forward to working alongside Judge Dunkle as we lead the Court together.”*