



COURTHOUSE FUN FACTS



Why Are Courtrooms Open To The Public?



The reason why trials are open to the public is addressed in the United States Constitution. The Sixth Amendment in the Bill of Rights states that, “In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial.” The words “a public trial” imply that the public has an interest in seeing that justice has been served and that the trial process should be subject to public scrutiny to minimize malfeasance on the part of the justice system.

How Does Someone Become A Judge In California?

In California, there are two ways to become a judge: by appointment of the Governor, or by election. Either way, a judge’s seat is up for election every six years, so whether the judge was appointed or elected, he or she must still be elected again every six years. If no one runs against the judge, his/her name will not appear on the ballot.

What Does The Bailiff Do?



The duty of the bailiff is to provide security for those in attendance in the courtroom. They escort defendants who are in custody and they assist the judge and the clerk in the administration of court functions. In Solano County, bailiffs are deputies in the Solano County Sheriff’s Office. Most of them are performing a several-month assignment that is part of the regular rotation between patrol duties, the Coroner’s Office, or other assignments such as code enforcement.

Why Do Judges Wear Black Robes?

Judges in England have worn robes, red for formal occasions and black for routine court proceedings, for hundreds of years. When the United States of America was founded, Founding Fathers Thomas Jefferson and John Adams disagreed about what judges here should wear. John Adams wanted red robes but Thomas Jefferson was opposed to any “needless official apparel” and wanted judges to wear business suits. A compromise was reached for judges to wear black robes. Now, all judges throughout the United States wear simple black robes, except the Court of Appeal in Maryland, that state’s highest court, where judges wear red robes. Luckily, it was decided that American judges would not wear wigs, which are required in Great Britain and some other countries.

Why Are Judges Referred To As “Your Honor”?

This is another tradition carried on from England to today. In England, judges in high courts are addressed as “Your Lordship” or “Your Ladyship” and judges in lower courts are referred to as “Your Honor”. In the United States, we have carried on that tradition as have courts in some other countries.



What Is A Gavel?

A gavel is a small ceremonial hammer or mallet that judges strike against a wooden block to call the proceedings to order. It is a symbol of the authority of the presiding judge. Judges have used gavels since medieval times, but today many judges choose not to use them in court.

Where Is The Oldest Courthouse In California?

The courthouse in Mariposa County was built in 1854 and is still in use today.

What About Here In Solano County?

The first courthouse opened in Solano County in 1860. There are actually four courthouses in this county presently. The Solano Justice Center is in Vallejo and handles only criminal cases. In Fairfield we have the Hall of Justice where a variety of cases are heard including family law, civil law, and juvenile cases. The Law and Justice Building is next door which only has criminal cases. The Old Solano Courthouse is on Texas Street, and is the historic courthouse. It opened in 1911 and was used as a courthouse until the early 1970s, when it was converted for use as county offices and the courthouse was moved into the Hall of Justice, which was formerly Armijo High School. After the County Building opened, the courthouse underwent an extensive renovation. It reopened in 2014 and civil cases are heard there. One of the courtrooms, Courtroom I, was renovated to look exactly as it did when the courthouse first opened in 1911 (except for modern electronics). Even the original light fixtures were retrieved from storage and placed in the courtroom.

Who Was The First Judge In Solano County?

The first superior court judge in Solano County was Abraham Buckles, who was appointed in 1885 (although there were “county judges” before that.) Judge Buckles joined the Union Army at age 15 and was wounded in several battles before he was shot in the knee 2 weeks before the end of the war. His leg was amputated. He was awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest military award, for his service. After the war he decided to become a lawyer. He taught school while reading for the law. He was admitted to the State Bar in 1875 and moved to Dixon to start his career as a lawyer. Solano County now has 20 judges and 3 court commissioners.

Who Was Solano County’s First Female Judge?

Judge Ramona Garrett was this county’s first female and first Black judge. She was appointed to the municipal court in 1992 and became a superior court judge in 1997 when California municipal and superior courts were consolidated. She overcame many challenges to become a lawyer, then a prosecutor, and eventually a judge. She developed the Solano Drug Court and also was elected Presiding Judge during her tenure as a judge. Judge Garrett retired in 2015.