

The Honorable Judith D. Ford

The Honorable Judith D. Ford (Ret.) is a pioneer in the legal field and in the history of Black Women Lawyers Association of Northern California (“BWLNC”). In 1979, Judge Ford hosted a gathering of Black women who worked in the legal field, and it was there that BWLNC was formed.

A California native and a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, Judge Ford graduated from Boalt Hall School of Law in 1974. After graduation, Judge Ford joined the law firm of Petty, Andrews, Tuffs & Jackson as an associate. In 1978, she became an Assistant District Attorney for the City and County of San Francisco. Judge Ford left the District Attorney’s Office in 1980 to join the Federal Trade Commission where she served as Regional Director.

In 1982, Governor Jerry Brown appointed Judge Ford to the Municipal Court for the Oakland-Piedmont-Emeryville Judicial District where she became Presiding Judge in 1987. Judge Ford became an Alameda Superior Court Judge in 1998 upon the unification of the courts, and she served in that capacity until her retirement in 2002.

During her distinguished career, Judge Ford was repeatedly recognized for her work in improving the administration of justice, particularly in the area of courtroom technology. She chaired the state’s Court Technology Advisory Committee in 1998. While leading the panel, Judge Ford helped develop standards for privacy and access to electronic court information and pushed for improved case management systems. She also spearheaded a Tactical Plan for Court Technology to ensure effective management of technology resources in the state’s court system. After leaving the state panel, Judge Ford served as a member of the national Joint Technology Committee and helped develop a Business Process Enhancements Guide and Manual for Courts. In 2002, Judge Ford received her first-ever LexisNexis CourtLink Excellence in Legal Technology award which recognized her for her “leadership, innovation and championing of technology to deliver breakthrough advances in the efficient practice of litigation in the courts.”

The very next year, Judge Ford received the National Center for State Courts’ Distinguished Service Award as a result of her career commitment to improving the justice system.

Despite her many career heights and achievements, Judge Ford has never lost her commitment to BWLNC. Our resident historian and storyteller, Judge Ford has been committed to the members of this organization since its inception, and for her pioneering spirit, mentorship, and support, BWLNC is truly thankful.