



## **HON. SUZANNE RAMOS BOLANOS (RET.)**

**Mediator • Arbitrator**



With over two decades of experience as a Judge, Hon. Suzanne Ramos Bolanos (Ret.) brings unparalleled expertise and insight to dispute resolution across a wide range of areas, including complex commercial disputes, employment, and medical malpractice.

Whether from the bench as a judge, at the negotiation table as a settlement facilitator, or now as a full-time mediator and arbitrator, Judge Bolanos has a reputation for being patient, fair, and persistent. She believes in guiding parties toward resolution, not just through legal analysis, but also by helping them visualize what a trial will actually be like: testifying before jurors, navigating evidentiary rules, and facing the unpredictability of a verdict. Her approach is practical, empathetic, and rooted in years of experience helping litigants find closure outside of the courtroom. As she often says, reaching a fair settlement can sometimes be more satisfying than a hard-fought trial victory, and she takes pride in facilitating resolutions that allow parties to move forward.

Judge Bolanos was designated by multiple Presiding Judges to serve as a civil settlement judge, where she resolved countless cases, including complex employment, medical malpractice, and commercial disputes. As a settlement judge, she was entrusted with some of the most contentious and high-stakes cases, successfully guiding parties to resolution through her patient, strategic, and practical approach. Her ability to connect with litigants and understand their underlying motivations has been key to her success in dispute resolution. Fluent in both English and Spanish, she brings cultural competence and an ability to connect with people from all walks of life. Her philosophy centers on helping parties see the benefits of settlement over prolonged litigation, emphasizing practical solutions and risk assessment.

Prior to her judicial career, Judge Bolanos built a formidable legal background. As an Assistant United States Attorney in the Northern District of California, she handled significant civil and criminal cases, including prosecuting intellectual property crimes and defending the government in employment discrimination cases. Earlier in her career, she served as Counsel to Senator Edward Kennedy on the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, where she played a role in shaping education and civil rights policy. She also worked as a Special Assistant for Domestic Policy to Vice President Al Gore, focusing on issues such as immigration and education reform. Additionally, she was a civil rights attorney with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), advocating for bilingual education and equal access to higher education.

Judge Bolanos is a respected leader in the legal community and made history as the first Latina judge on the San Francisco Superior Court. She was appointed by the Chief Justice to the Judicial Council of California Civil Jury Instruction Committee (CACI) where she served for over ten years, she is the former Chair of the California Judges Association's Government Relations Committee, and she is a past President of the California Latino Judges Association. She also trained new judges and taught evidence to experienced judges for many years as faculty for the Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER), the educational arm of the California Judicial Branch. She is a lifetime member of the Hispanic National Bar Association and the San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association. Her contributions to the field have been widely recognized with honors, including the San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Lifetime Achievement Award and the St. Thomas More Award for community service.

A proud native of Oakland, California, Judge Bolanos earned her undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley, before obtaining her J.D. from Yale Law School, where she was a Senior Editor of the Yale Law Journal. In her dispute resolution practice, she continues her mission of helping litigants find solutions, bringing her deep legal knowledge, judicial experience, and dedication to fairness.

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Commercial Contract/General Business
- Disaster Relief
- Employment
- Medical Malpractice
- Personal Injury
- Products Liability

## EDUCATION

- **J.D., Yale Law School**, New Haven, CT (1989)
  - Honors: Senior Editor, *Yale Law Journal*
- **B.A., University of California**, Berkeley, CA (1986)
  - Graduated with Highest Honors in Political Science

## JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

### SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

**Judge**, San Francisco, CA (2003-2025)

- **Civil Court:** Presided over more than 100 civil trials, including complex civil trials. Heard law and motion matters, conducted settlement conferences and mediations. (2006-2008; 2012; 2015-2025)
- **Juvenile Court:** Presided over juvenile delinquency trials and related matters. Presiding Judge of Youth Family Court. (2013-2014)
- **Appellate Division:** As Presiding Judge, managed appellate division docket, assigned judges to cases, led case conferences, heard cases, wrote, and approved opinions and orders. (Presiding Judge, 2009-2011; Member, 2008-2011)
- **Criminal Court Assignment:** Presided over more than 75 felony and misdemeanor jury trials. Conducted preliminary hearings and arraignments. (2003-2005; 2009-2011; 2019-2020)
- **Judicial Council and State Bar Committees:**
  - Judicial Council Civil Jury Instruction Committee (2014-2025)
  - Judicial Council Criminal Law Advisory Committee (2011-2014)
  - Executive Committee, Litigation Section, State Bar of California (2013-2017)
- **Court Committees:**
  - Chair, Elimination of Bias Committee (2021-2025)
  - Co-Chair, Color of Justice (2008-2019)
  - Co-Chair, San Francisco Superior Court Events Committee (2009-2014)
  - San Francisco Law Library Trustee (2008-2011)
  - Elected Member, San Francisco Superior Court Executive Committee (2004-2006)
  - Member of various Superior Court committees (Personnel, Civil Grand Jury, Technology)

## LEGAL EXPERIENCE

### OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

**Assistant United States Attorney**, San Jose, San Francisco, San Diego, CA (1997-2003)

- **Computer Crimes and Intellectual Property Unit:** Prosecuted intellectual property theft, internet fraud, and related crimes. Worked with FBI and DOJ personnel.
- **Civil Division:** Defended the federal government in tort and employment discrimination cases. Prosecuted civil violations of the Controlled Substances Act. Argued before the Ninth Circuit.
- **Border Crimes Division:** Prosecuted drug trafficking, alien smuggling, and criminal alien re-entry cases. Supervised federal agents and argued cases before the Ninth Circuit.

### WILMER, CUTLER & PICKERING LLP

**Associate**, Washington, D.C. (1995-1997)

- Litigated government contracts and intellectual property cases.

### OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, THE WHITE HOUSE

**Special Assistant to the Vice President for Domestic Policy**, Washington, D.C. (1994-1995)

- Advised Vice President Al Gore on domestic policy matters, including welfare reform, education, immigration, and crime. Drafted policy proposals and legislation.

## **OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Special Assistant to the Under Secretary**, Washington, D.C. (1993-1994)

- Assisted in formulating the Clinton Administration's education policy. Developed legislative and budgetary recommendations for the President.

## **LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE, UNITED STATES SENATE**

**Counsel**, Washington, D.C. (1991-1993)

- Advised Senator Edward Kennedy on education and civil rights legislation. Conducted fact-finding investigations, tracked elections, and liaised with Latino organizations.

## **MEXICAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE & EDUCATIONAL FUND (MALDEF)**

**Staff Attorney**, San Jose, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. (1989-1991)

- Litigated civil rights cases involving bilingual education, desegregation, and equal access to higher education. Represented MALDEF on Capitol Hill.

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS & ACTIVITIES**

- California Latino Judges Association (President, 2016-2018; Chair, Judicial Endorsement Committee 2016-2018)
- National Association of Women Judges (2003-Present)
- California Judges Association (Chair, Government Relations Committee, 2019-2023)
- State Bar of California, Litigation Section Executive Committee
- Hispanic National Bar Association (Annual Convention Planning Committee, 2003, 2006)
- San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association (Chair, Judiciary Committee, Life Member)
- San Diego La Raza Lawyers Association (Board Member, 1998-1999)
- Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia (President, 1992-1993)

## **HONORS & AWARDS**

- San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association, Lifetime Achievement Award (2022)
- St. Thomas More Award, St. Thomas More Society (2017)
- San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Women's History Month Award (2009)
- San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association, Judge's Award (2003, 2007)
- San Francisco Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Distinguished Leader Award (2005)
- National Latino Peace Officers Association, Woman of the Year (2004)
- Hispanic Bar Association of D.C., Equal Justice Award (2002)
- Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, Fellowship (1989)
- *Yale Law Journal*, Senior Editor (1987)

## **ADDITIONAL SKILLS**

- Fully bilingual in English and Spanish