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Recent Judicial Profiles

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Christopher C. Hite

San Francisco County Judge Christopher Hite's PD's office experience affects how he runs his court.



Christopher C. Hite

Superior Court Judge

San Francisco County (San Francisco)

Career Highlights: Appointed to the San Francisco County Superior Court by Gov. Jerry Brown, Dec. 23, 2015; deputy public defender, San Francisco public defender's office, 1998-2015; sole practitioner, San Francisco, 1996-1998

Law School: Santa Clara University School of Law, 1994

apprehensive."

"Two hours into the first day, I was like, 'This guy is fantastic.' ... It was obvious that he had been just waiting to come in and fix the inefficiencies to make things run

By Chase DiFeliciano

Judge Christopher C. Hite has been a public servant almost his entire professional career, and some of the skills he acquired in almost 18 years as a public defender have translated into his time on the bench.

Hite currently serves in Department 9 of the San Francisco County Superior Court, where he was previously a deputy public defender.

The judge has used that fact to his advantage, according to Assistant District Attorney Thomas Ostly, who argued against Hite when he was still a public defender.

"He's been there for so long, he knows everybody, he also knows how that department works and how it runs," Ostly said. "Knowing that he wanted to change things and do things his way, when he came into Department 9, I have to tell you I was more than a little bit

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

Weekly Appellate Report Podcast

Net neutrality may meet SCOTUS review, after the D.C. Circuit declines to rehear *en banc* its approval of the rules. Professor Stuart Benjamin (Duke Law) explains the current regulations, the First Amendment elements of the appeal, and why ISPs may pursue it though the new FCC chair seems set to re-write the rules. Professor Deborah Sivas (Stanford Law) discusses the Cal. Supreme Court's latest look at how developers must reckon with the state's long-range greenhouse gas reduction targets

[see more](#)

Litigation

Sirius settles with Flo & Eddie for up to \$73M

A federal judge granted final approval Monday to a settlement between Sirius XM Radio Inc. and a class of pre-1972 song owners that could entitle the class to as much as \$73 million.

Mergers & Acquisitions

Dealmakers

A roundup of recent transactions and the lawyers involved.

Law Practice

Criminal defense attorneys launch woman-owned boutique in downtown LA

Former federal prosecutor Mary C. Andruess and longtime criminal defense attorney Vicki I. Podberesky teamed up earlier this month to open Andruess/Podberesky, a downtown Los Angeles boutique owned by the two women, who both now handle white collar criminal defense work.

Public Interest

Consumer Watchdog honors consumer attorney at awards event

Blending optimism with caution, the advocacy

smoothly," Ostly added.

Rebecca Young, a senior trial attorney with the San Francisco public defender's office, described Hite's approach to legal work as methodical, organized and even-tempered.

"It's who he is as a person," Young said.

Hite admits that he had a reputation at the public defender's office as being highly organized, a skill he said is partially attributable to his first year of law school at Santa Clara University School of Law, where he simultaneously played football.

"I think that being able to set up your schedule, have it dictated to some extent by necessity, I think really did probably carry over to being able to balance things at the public defender's office," Hite said.

Hite was sworn in as a judge in January 2016 and served in traffic court until January 2017, something he described as an excellent learning experience. He currently sits on a felony preliminary hearing court and has occasionally been called to serve as a trial judge.

Ostly also said that Hite uses his clout as a former veteran public defender to quell spats between attorneys, although not by taking his old side.

In one instance which Ostly described, he and a defense attorney were discussing a case in Hite's chambers. When the defense attorney began to bicker about the case, Hite quickly cut him off.

"He basically told the defense counsel [to] be quiet and stop interfering with me doing my job, or help," Ostly said.

"The fact that he was a public defender for 17 years, he can say that," Ostly added. "The way he was doing it was just in his Chris Hite way, which was respectful and polite and maybe a little bit exasperated."

"Because a lot of the attorneys know me from before, we try and keep it a little lighthearted, especially back in chambers when we're trying to resolve cases. ... When they come in here, I want them to work on resolving things as best they can," Hite said.

Attorneys who have worked with Hite uniformly praised his judicial and personal temperament.

Deputy Public Defender Crystal Lamb, who is assigned to Hite's courtroom, described an episode when a woman came in for arraignment and began to hurl verbal abuse at Hite. "He just looked down and said, 'Maybe we need a mental health examination,' and was very kind to her," Lamb said. "Some judges might not have taken that kindly."

"His personality is a natural part of his judicial demeanor," Young said.

Hite said that he strives to make attorneys feel fairly treated in his courtroom. "If they respect your demeanor, I think you'll get that back from them," Hite said.

He added that he does not want attorneys to "feel like they have to do their battle with the judge over something that isn't the legal issue."

Attorneys were not so unanimous when discussing Hite's practices around releasing defendants on bail.

"He's been conservative. He's very reluctant to release people," Young said. "In this era of bail reform, litigation and a recognition that money bail discriminates against the poor, he doesn't release people easily."

Ostly however said that Hite excels at balancing considerations like a defendant losing their job if they are denied bail and the flight risk they pose. "I think that when he has to balance those things he does a fantastic job," the lawyer said.

Attorneys described Hite's approach to his practice as scholarly, praising his nuanced

group Consumer Watchdog honored Christine Spagnoli of Greene Broillet & Wheeler LLP, musician Jackson Browne and U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont on Saturday.

Antitrust & Trade Reg.

Bumble Bee Foods to pay \$25M for fixing prices on shelf tuna

The U.S. Department of Justice filed its first charges against a corporation in its investigation into fraudulent practices in the packaged seafood industry Monday.

Government

Holder contract with state Legislature extended for a month

The state Legislature has decided to extend its contract with former U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder and his firm, Covington & Burling LLP, for one additional month, according to a spokesman for Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, D-Lakewood.

State Bar & Bar Associations

LACBA section, Board of Trustee member criticize election redo

The Los Angeles County Bar Association broke its own laws when it invalidated the 2017-18 election, barred members from speaking about it and ordered a new election, according to one section and a member of the Board of Trustees.

Firm Watch

Irell nabs federal prosecutor, first partner hire in 2 years

Jason Linder joined Irell & Manella LLP on Monday, marking his return to Los Angeles after nearly 10 years investigating and prosecuting white collar and corruption matters for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Government

Bill to aid deported military veterans passes Assembly

A bill passed the state Assembly Monday that would increase access to reentry legal services for deported U.S. military veterans.

California Courts of Appeal

Court: College district's parking lot plan violated state environmental law

San Mateo Community College District violated California's landmark environment protection law when it did not sufficiently report how demolishing a campus garden would affect the environment, the 1st District Court of Appeal has ruled.

Government

Judges oppose voir dire bill

Assembly Bill 1541, a common sense measure that will improve voir dire in criminal cases, will be heard Tuesday in the Assembly Judiciary

understanding of the law.

"He just was so well versed in the law. ... He was one of the sounding board guys," said Peter Fitzpatrick, a former San Francisco deputy public defender now in private practice at the Law Office of Peter Fitzpatrick in San Francisco.

"I rip off his motions all the time," said Lamb, noting Hite's scholarly reputation during his time as a deputy public defender. "Our office is full of motions that he's written on pretty much every topic."

Hite has also been involved with social justice initiatives since law school, where he served as the vice president of the Black Law Students Association while at Santa Clara University School of Law.

During his two years of private practice before becoming a deputy public defender, Hite also worked as a legal consultant for the San Francisco branch of the NAACP and volunteered at the public defender's office in San Francisco.

Hite went on to chair the Racial Justice Committee within the San Francisco public defender's office, which among other initiatives worked with the San Francisco Police Department to implement the use of body-worn cameras for officers.

Perhaps the highest praise of Hite came from Fitzpatrick, who tried an attempted murder, assault and resisting arrest case before Hite. "He got a very significant sentence," Fitzpatrick said of his client, adding, "The way [Hite] did it, I think he left the man with his humanity intact."

Here are some of Judge Hite's recent cases and the attorney's involved:

*People v. Beck, 16021114 - attempted criminal threat, hate crime allegation

For the prosecution: Blair McGregor, district attorney's office

For the defense: Abigail Rivamonte, public defender's office

*People v. Sandifer, 14020410 - attempted murder

For the prosecution: Larry Desouza, district attorney's office

For the defense: Peter Fitzpatrick, The Law Office of Peter Fitzpatrick, San Francisco

*People v. Ortiz, 15011738 - DUI

For the prosecution: Tanisha Gooch, district attorney's office

For the defense: Everett Hewlett III, public defender's office

*People v. Rivas, 16019292 - child molestation preliminary hearing

For the prosecution: O'Bryan Kenney, district attorney's office

For the defense: Matthew Sotorosen, public defender's office

*People v. Silva, 16021050 - robbery and assault

For the prosecution: Dane Reinstedt, district attorney's office

For the defense: Brian Pearlman, public defender's office

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Daily Journal Profile Guidelines

Recent Judicial Profiles

Committee. So why do some judges oppose it? By **Jeff Adachi**

Technology & Science

Not your garden variety trade secrets case

When one of the lawyers appearing at last week's *Waymo v. Uber* preliminary injunction hearing said it was "not your garden variety trade secrets case," he might have been accused of understatement. By **James Pooley**

Administrative/Regulatory

Health care reform and medical malpractice

Pending legislation in Congress and a recent Court of Appeal decision have created uncertainty as to what evidence can be introduced in medical malpractice cases. By **Bruce G. Fagel**

Litigation

When does the *Cumis* statute rate cap apply?

Depending upon how a particular policy is worded, an insurer may not be entitled to rely upon the rate cap. By **Dominic Nexbitt**

Government Contracts

Promissory estoppel claims and public works bid disputes

Flintco Pacific was a clear win for public works subcontractors. However, it also creates another potential battle-of-the-forms battleground. By **Garret Murai**

Administrative/Regulatory

CPUC looks to take away one escape route for public utilities

Utility companies should be compelled to regularly advise residential and commercial customers of their vegetation management protocols so someone doesn't go off and hurt themselves or someone else.. By **John Aiello**

Biometric data laws are spreading across US

Considering the recent wave of biometric litigation, virtual and augmented reality businesses should address the privacy risks and legal requirements associated with biometric data. By **Zerina Curevac**

Law Practice

Think you know craft beer attorneys?

Craft beer lawyering, while seemingly "so cool" to some lawyers, at the end of the day is just another day at the law office mostly crafting solutions to trademark issues. By **Daniel J. Croxall**

Judicial Profile

Christopher C. Hite

Superior Court Judge
San Francisco County (San Francisco)



Patrick T. Madden
Superior Court of
California County of
Los Angeles - South
District - Long Beach



Christopher C Hite
Superior Court of
California County of
San Francisco - Hall
of Justice



Kenneth K. So
Superior Court San
Diego County, State
of California - Central
Division



Mark C. Kim
Superior Court of
California County of
Los Angeles - South
District - Long Beach

Corporate Counsel

Brian E. Nelson

VP and General Counsel

Los Angeles 2024 Exploratory Committee (Los Angeles)

Labor/Employment

State high court seeks to put to bed rest day feud

The state Supreme Court clarified Monday a 114-year-old employee rest day law it wrote was "manifestly ambiguous," but the justices arguably kept some ambiguity in navigating it.

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