



# Superior Court of the State of California

## COUNTY OF STANISLAUS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **COURT ANNOUNCES NOMINATION OF JUDGE SONNY S. SANDHU TO THE FIFTH DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL**

**JUNE 4, 2026 Modesto, CA** – Gov. Gavin Newsom has nominated Stanislaus County Superior Court Judge Sonny S. Sandhu to serve as an Associate Justice of the Fifth District Court of Appeal. Judge Sandhu would fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Rosendo Peña Jr. The nomination is subject to confirmation by the Commission on Judicial Appointments, which includes Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and Senior Presiding Justice Brad Hill. If confirmed, Judge Sandhu would become the first judge from Stanislaus County appointed to the Court of Appeal since 1961 and the first Asian American Pacific Islander justice to serve on the Fifth District Court of Appeal.

Judge Sandhu, who has served on the Stanislaus County Superior Court since 2018 and as Presiding Judge over the past 18 months, said he is "deeply honored and humbled" by the nomination and described it as a privilege to serve the people of Stanislaus County alongside dedicated judicial officers and court staff. He added that he remains committed to upholding the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all. Before his appointment to the bench, Judge Sandhu served in several leadership roles with the Stanislaus County Public Defender's Office, including public defender from 2017 to 2018, chief deputy public defender from 2015 to 2017, and deputy public defender from 2003 to 2015. He earned his law degree from The Ohio State University College of Law.

In addition to his judicial service, Judge Sandhu has been actively engaged in community and educational outreach. He helped establish educational outreach programs with local elementary schools, was instrumental in developing the Court Observer Program in partnership with the Criminal Justice Department at Stanislaus State University and has coached Gregori High School's mock trial team. He is also a past president of the California Asian Pacific American Judges Association.

Assistant Presiding Judge Kellee C. Westbrook said the nomination reflects Judge Sandhu's integrity, leadership, and commitment to public service, describing him as an exceptional judge and colleague whose fairness and professionalism have earned the trust of the court and the community. She added that while Judge Sandhu will be greatly missed, his contributions to judicial leadership, education and outreach have had a lasting impact, and the Fifth District Court of Appeal will benefit from his experience, judgment, and commitment to justice.

For further information regarding this release, please contact:

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