



Legislation Text

File #: 18-870, **Version:** 1

Adopt and present a resolution and plaque of appreciation honoring Lesli Caldwell, Public Defender, upon her retirement from the Solano County Public Defender's Office with 38 years of public service to two California counties, including 12 years of dedicated service to the Solano County Public Defender's Office (Supervisor Thomson)

Published Notice Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The County Administrator recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt and present a resolution and plaque of appreciation honoring Lesli M. Caldwell, Public Defender, upon her retirement from the Solano County Public Defender's Office with 38 years of public service in two California counties, including 12 years of dedicated service to the Solano County Public Defender's Office.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

Lesli M. Caldwell grew up in the Bay Area and attended the University of California at Berkeley, where she received her B.A. degree in 1976, and received her law degree from Santa Clara University in 1979.

In 1980, Ms. Caldwell began her public service career with the Contra Costa County Public Defender's Office as a trial attorney. She gained a lot of valuable experience during this time, representing every type of case coming into the office, from misdemeanors to capital murder. Ms. Caldwell developed a specialization in gang cases and mental health issue cases. During her time with Contra Costa County, Ms. Caldwell was actively involved in mentoring and training less experienced attorneys.

In 2007, Ms. Caldwell retired from the Contra Costa Public Defender and joined the Solano County Public Defender as Chief Deputy, and in 2010, she was appointed by the Board to lead the department as the Solano County Public Defender.

As the Solano County Public Defender, Ms. Caldwell has focused on hiring passionate and committed attorneys who share her dedication for advocating for the rights of the poor who find themselves confronted with the criminal justice system. Through her leadership, the quality of litigation has improved, resulting in better outcomes for the clients of the office. The office had a 66% positive outcome of all felony jury trials and 73% of all misdemeanor jury trials for 2016 and a 78% positive outcome of all felony jury trials and 84% of all misdemeanor jury trials for 2017.

Ms. Caldwell has added ancillary services to provide resources to help clients obtain rehabilitative services, through our Social Workers, and clear up their arrest and conviction record, with our Paralegals.

Ms. Caldwell has also overseen the transition to a new case management system, which has increased productivity through its connection to the courts' data. The misdemeanor unit is almost completely paperless, with the other units well on the way. This new system will eventually connect with Probation, the Sheriff and District Attorney.

Ms. Caldwell is dedicated to educating attorneys, helping ensure the best possible representation and continues to be active in training, both in the office and throughout the state. She is a presenter every year at the California Public Defender Association Trial Skills Institute for new lawyers, and at the Brian Shechmeister Death Penalty College, to experienced practitioners with capital cases from around the country.

In addition, Ms. Caldwell has been a Board Member with California Attorneys for Criminal Justice and with Legal Services for Northern California. She is the National Legal Aid and Defender Association Liaison to the American Bar Association Criminal Justice Standards Committee, and on the Committee on Indigent Defense for the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

Ms. Caldwell will be retiring on December 31, 2018 after serving the Solano County community for over 12 years. During Ms. Caldwell's tenure, her tenacious advocacy has epitomized the mission of the Solano County Public Defender to defend the poor, the friendless, the abused, the down-trodden and the mentally ill with compassion, respect, creativity, and determination. In doing this, the rights of all people are guarded by defending the Constitution.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The costs associated with preparing the agenda item is nominal and absorbed by the department's FY2018/19 Adopted Budget. The costs associated with preparation and purchase of the resolution materials and plaque are included in the Board's FY2018/19 Adopted Budget.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board could choose not to adopt and present a plaque and resolution of appreciation; however, this is not recommended because this is an opportunity to recognize Lesli M. Caldwell's dedication and outstanding contributions Solano County.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The County's Administrator's Office has reviewed the item and concurs with the Department's recommendation.

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION