

Two Attorneys Join State Judicial Council

By Kenneth Davis

Two attorneys from different sections of the legal world will get an opportunity to bring their unique perspectives, skills and experience to the state Judicial Council this fall.

In early March, Los Angeles litigator Thomas Girardi and Barbara Parker, chief assistant city attorney of the advisory division of the Oakland city attorney's office, received word that the State Bar Board of Governors has appointed them to the 27-member council. Their three-year terms will begin Sept. 15.

"I was very honored by the appointment and hope I can do some good," Girardi says. "I'm prepared to devote whatever is necessary."

He says he believes his 39 years of experience in trial cases in Los Angeles courts will be a big asset on the Judicial Council.

"The Judicial Council is obviously entwined with the trial of cases," Girardi says. "And my experience as a trial lawyer gives me a great understanding of the administration of justice as well as the problems facing the court system."

Chaired by state Chief Justice Ronald M. George, the Judicial Council is the governing body of the California courts.

The state constitution directs the council to provide guidelines to the courts, make recommendations annually to the governor and Legislature, and adopt and revise state rules of court dealing with court administration, practice and procedure.

"What I'm very pleased about the two new appointments, in addition to their great experience and ability, is that they represent segments of the law that traditionally have not always been represented on the council," George says. "I have had discussions with the State Bar to get a broader spectrum of appointments to the council, and the bar has done an excellent job with these new appointees."



THOMAS GIRARDI

Parker is equally enthusiastic about her recent appointment to the council.

"I'm very honored and excited to represent the State Bar," Parker says. "It's a very important body, and I'm looking forward to bringing all my skills to bear in improving the legal system."

"And as an African-American woman, I believe I'll bring a distinct perspective to the Judicial Council."

Parker has been the chief assistant city attorney for 4½ years. She says the job is a very stimulating and her position allows her to work closely with elected officials in formulating policy.

"Ms. Parker represents the public sector very admirably and has a long and distinguished career in public service," George says. "She reflects diversity in several ways and will be a great addition to the council."

Girardi plans to tackle some of the court's biggest problems head-on.

"One of the problems is that the court system doesn't have a very loud voice in the Legislature," Girardi says. "The police department, fire department and the school system, for example, get a lot of attention because they have very loud voices in the Legislature. It's easy to squeeze the courts."

Girardi believes voters are much more likely to embrace concerns that they believe affect them more directly, such as more funding for schools, better trained teachers and more and better trained police officers, over concerns of the courts, which fall way down on the list. He wants to change that.

"I will also work towards getting better funding for the courts as well as better working conditions for the court's personnel, from the judges on down," he says.

Girardi hopes to improve the condition of courthouses throughout the state, some of which do not even meet earthquake safety standards.

That shouldn't be a problem for Girardi because he knows a bit about getting things done. He has taken on corporate giants, such as Lockheed Martin Corp., Ford Motor Co. and Pacific Gas & Electric Co., and obtained multimillion-dollar verdicts and settlements for his clients.

George says that consumer attorneys thought they needed more representation on the council and that Girardi fit the bill perfectly.

"I've known Mr. Girardi for 30 years," George says. "He's very insightful and possesses great ability to charm a jury. And he's a pre-eminent plaintiffs' attorney."

New members of the council and its committees are selected by a nominating procedure intended to attract applicants from throughout the legal system and result in membership that is diverse in experience, gender, ethnic background and geography, according to George.