

Hon. Kelly A. Bennett, Esq. (Mayor Emeritus)

Snapshot: An active trial attorney and mediator for over 32 years, guiding people through adversity has been at the core of Kelly Bennett's career. Since 1990, Kelly has worked as a trial and business lawyer. She's a Founding Partner and the Managing Attorney of Sapere Law in Temecula, California. Ms. Bennett is well known for her work in family law – negotiating, mediating and litigating for people who've had some really horrible (sometimes unthinkable) things happen; betrayals by those they trusted most. Kelly has represented business owners and organizational leaders in the midst of serious and complicated problems (sometimes quite personal) where the viability of their life's work was at risk. In 2006, Kelly was the first woman to be elected to the Murrieta City Council where she served as Mayor, and a regional government leader, creating systems and processes for productivity and solving large-scale problems. Kelly hosts the ***On Fire Empire*** podcast, providing legal information and lifestyle help for people going through legal and personal challenges. Ms. Bennett is the author of ***Victim Is Not Your Name: Remembering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life Challenges***. Kelly is an avid vegan, fitness and surfing enthusiast. She enjoys down time in the ocean with her husband Greg, and "doing life" with their two daughters, Rachael and Chloe.



EDUCATION

- Juris Doctorate, Pepperdine University School of Law, 1990
- Certificate in Dispute Resolution, Institute for Dispute Resolution, Pepperdine University School of Law, 1990
- Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, Pepperdine University, 1987

EXPERIENCE

- Before shifting the majority of her practice to complex, high-asset family law cases in 2022, Ms. Bennett practiced law in Southern California with an emphasis on corporate and business start-ups, real estate, landslide/soil subsidence, construction defect and business litigation.
- 32 years mediating, arbitrating and private judging a wide range of disputes. Presently, Ms. Bennett mediates exclusively family law disputes. Ms. Bennett has presided over 1,000 cases, including high-asset/complex family law matters, wrongful termination and employment-related, elder abuse, personal injury, business transactions, partnerships, contracts, real estate, homeowner associations, construction, landlord-tenant, physician-patient, church, technology, recording and licensing agreements, attorney-client disputes and governmental entity issues.
- Judge Pro Tem for Riverside Family Law bench, downtown Riverside division.
- 2009-2010 President, Southwest Riverside County Bar Association; Vice President, Board Member, President 2006-2009.
- 2012 - present Founding Member/Executive Board, Southwest Inns of Court. President, 2015-2016.
- Court-appointed mediator for L.A. County Courts, Judge Pro Tem/Settlement Officer for Orange and Riverside County Superior Courts, Judge Pro Tem (Small Claims Panel) for Riverside Superior Court, Attorney Settlement Officer for the U.S. District (Federal) Court, Central District, and arbitration panelist for the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD) and the Better Business Bureau (BBB).
- 2006 – 2014 Councilwoman, Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem for the City of Murrieta, California.
- 2011 – 2013 Appointed Member, Riverside County Superior Court and State of California Administrative Office of the Courts Site Selection Committee for Hemet Replacement Courthouse.

- As an elected official, founded Murrieta's first Youth Court Program, an alternate diversion program for first-time, low-level juvenile offenders.
- Chairwoman of the Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG), a coalition of 16 local jurisdictions, water districts and county districts.
- Past Member, S.A.F.E. (Safe Alternatives for Everyone - Domestic Violence Prevention) Advisory Board.
- Past Member, Rancho Damacitas Children & Family Services (Empowerment Village) Advisory Board.

PUBLICATIONS

In 2020 Ms. Bennett released her first book, *Victim Is Not Your Name: Remembering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life Challenges* available at Amazon.com. Ms. Bennett and her work have been featured in *USA Today*, *Yahoo*, *CBS News*, *MS NBC*, *ABC*, *The New York Times*, *Inland Empire Magazine*, *Riverside County Lawyer Magazine*, as well as local newspaper, radio and television interviews. Ms. Bennett's articles have been published in numerous magazines, including the *Christian Management Report*, *Church Executive Magazine*, and *Riverside County Lawyer*. She is also the co-author of *The Creative Covenant Marriage Agreement* with pastor Ed Young, Jr. of Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas.

SPEAKING/TEACHING

A popular speaker and host of the *On Fire Empire Podcast*, Ms. Bennett frequently speaks to groups of organizational and business leaders on topics of leadership, business planning and growth, personal development and problem solving. Leading specialized conferences and workshops, many business owners have benefitted from Ms. Bennett's business conference *The Success Lab*.

Ms. Bennett frequently lectures and presents programs on conflict resolution to area bar associations, business organizations, churches and schools. She also facilitates goal setting, team building and organizational conflict resolution workshops for various organizations. Engagements include: The Riverside County Women's Leadership Conference (keynote speaker), Riverside County Bar Association, Southwest Riverside County Bar Association, Western Riverside Council of Governments annual goal setting/strategic planning facilitator, City of Murrieta and InSoCal Connect, regional governmental associations, Association of Women Professionals, Professional Women's Roundtable, Temecula Valley Entrepreneurs Exchange, California Women Lead, Rotary International, Christian Management Association, Creative Church Conference (C3) at Fellowship Church (Grapevine, Texas), Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) annual conference; Biola University (Masters in Organizational Leadership Program), and the Robert Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership. Ms. Bennett has taught Professional Responsibility and Ethics at Trinity University School of Law in Orange County, California.

LEADERSHIP & AFFILIATIONS

- Past member, Association for Conflict Resolution (Practitioner-Level Member)
- Member, Masters' Forum, Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, Pepperdine School of Law (invitation-only annual forum of advanced ADR practitioners)
- President, Southwest Riverside County Bar Association (2007, 2009-2010)
- 2008 Officer/Board Member Southwest Riverside County Bar
- Charter Member, Executive Board Member and President, Southwest Inns of Court
- 2014 Member Inland Empire Courts Coalition, testimony before California Senate and Assembly Budget Committees on Court Funding
- 2007-10 Member, Court-Community Planning Committee, Riverside County Superior Court
- 2011-2013 Member, Riverside County Superior Court/Administrative Office of the Courts, new court Project Advisory Group
- Mayor, City of Murrieta, CA (Term 2009-2010)

- Mayor Pro Tem, Councilmember, City of Murrieta, CA (Terms 2006-2010, 2010-2014)
- Charter Member, Murrieta Youth Court Steering Committee, 2008
- Chair, Western Riverside Council of Governments Executive Committee
- Elected Official Member, Southwest Cities Coalition
- City of Murrieta Council Subcommittee on Higher Education
- Member, S.A.F.E. (Safe Alternatives for Everyone) Domestic Violence Prevention Advisory Board
- Member, Rose Again Foundation Advisory Board
- Past member, Christian Management Association, National Association of Church Business Administration, Christian Legal Society.
- Additional past memberships include Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR), the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, the Southern California Mediation Association, the Federal Bar Association, and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.