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# Retired Federal Judge Margaret Morrow joins Judicate West

**Morrow, who headed Public Counsel for five years after leaving the bench, said "I wasn't ready to retire."**

Judge Margaret M. Morrow, who spent 18 years on the federal bench and five years as head of Public Counsel, has joined Judicate West as a neutral.

"I wasn't ready to retire," Morrow said. "I wanted a role in which I could continue to handle challenging legal issues as I did while I was on the bench, and I determined mediating and arbitrating would allow me to do that and it would also give me an opportunity to help parties find creative solutions to legal disputes beyond those discovered through the litigation process itself."

Rosemarie Chiusano Drohan, executive vice president at Judicate West, said the dispute resolution company was thrilled to have Morrow join its roster.

"She was an exceptional judge, and her work ethic, preparation, warmth and integrity cascade into everything she does," Chiusano Drohan said. "ADR and dispute resolution experience have been staples throughout her career -- from her commercial law practice, to her time on the bench, as CEO of Public Counsel, and in her leadership with regional and statewide bar associations. Private judging brings her career full circle, and she is a shining example of what women can achieve in the legal profession."

Prior to becoming a judge, Morrow was a partner at Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP. She was nominated to the Central District of California in 1997. She took senior status in 2015 and retired completely a year later to take the helm at Public Counsel. On the bench, she oversaw the court's alternative dispute resolution program and led the effort to build a new federal courthouse in Los Angeles.

Throughout her career, Morrow said, there were many difficult cases that needed a fair mind to forge a resolution. She recalled one that involved the residents of the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. They filed a putative class action against Rio Tinto plc and Rio Tinto Ltd. under the Alien Tort Claims Act, the 1789 law that plaintiffs have tried to use to hold companies responsible in U.S. courts for alleged acts committed in other countries.

The Australian mining giant was accused of destroying the island's environment, harming the health of its people and inciting a 10-year civil war that ended with thousands of people dying or maimed. They claimed Rio Tinto was guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity as well as racial discrimination and environmental harm. *Sarei v. Rio Tinto PLC*, 221 F. Supp. 2d 1116 (C.D. Cal. 2002)

"We had a lot of international law claims in the case," Morrow recalled. "You start with the law that is available and move on from there. It leads you to a result which a higher court may or may not think was accurate."

Thirteen years later, Rio Tinto won the case after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a similar case against DaimlerChrysler AG that the Alien Tort Claims Act could not be used in this way.

Morrow said the case has stuck with her "both for the factual allegations that were involved as well as the legal issues."

"It was a legally complicated case but it was also a factually important case in terms of the lives of all of the people of Bougainville," she said.

Morrow, who was born in Nebraska but grew up in Southern California, said she became interested in the law in the 2nd grade when her father started taking night classes at Loyola Law School.

"For four years all I knew about my dad was he was going to school at night and studying in our garage on the weekends," she said. "It was at that time I knew I wanted to practice law."

Morrow has often been lauded throughout a nearly five decade legal career for work ethic, willingness to tackle thorny problems and mentorship to others. She said the profession is much more hospitable for women than it was when she graduated law school.

"We've made a lot of progress, but we still have a lot farther to go to achieve that truly gender neutral profession," Morrow said. "To achieve that goal we need young female professionals who are committed to continuing and building on the progress that's been made today. Commit all the way; commit to your clients, commit to the betterment of the profession, commit to a society where equal justice under law is more than just a catch phrase and it's truly a reality."

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