



## Hon. David L. Belz, Ret.



*Results Beyond Dispute<sup>SM</sup>*

Judge Belz served on the Orange County Superior Court bench for 15 years, following a distinguished 32-year career as a trial attorney. His professional background is uniquely broad, encompassing extensive experience as both a trial lawyer and a trial judge. He began his legal career as a criminal defense attorney, spending his first five years handling major felony and misdemeanor jury trials. He then practiced as a personal injury trial attorney for 27 years, during which time he took a wide range of personal injury matters to trial and verdict in both state and federal courts. He also served for 14 years on the Board of Directors of the Orange County Trial Lawyers Association. In 2009, Judge Belz was appointed to the Orange County Superior Court. In January 2010, he was assigned to a family law courtroom, where he presided over a full spectrum of family law matters from initial filing through trial. He has described his five years in family court as among the most meaningful of his professional career. During that time, he developed a particular focus on high-conflict custody and visitation cases and the toxic stress such disputes can impose on children. He has written and taught extensively on the subject of toxic stress and its impact on children. In 2016, Judge Belz was assigned to a probate courtroom, where he managed a variety of probate calendars and was selected to preside over complex, long-cause trust trials estimated to exceed four days. Over eight and a half years on the probate panel, he handled trust, probate, guardianship, and conservatorship trials. As a long-cause trial judge, he presided over more than 80 trust trials, including matters lasting up to 22 days. Judge Belz has taught extensively in both family law and probate law. He was appointed to the Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER) and selected to teach fellow judges, drawing on experience in both family law and probate law. In 2021, he was appointed by the Chief Justice to serve on the Probate and Mental Health Advisory Committee. Judge Belz is a strong proponent of settlement. A graduate of the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution in December 2000, he began mediating cases while still in private practice, from 2001 through 2009, and has conducted several hundred personal injury mediations. He firmly believes that, with few exceptions, cases can and should resolve through settlement. His extensive trial experience as both an attorney and judicial officer provides him with keen insight into the strengths and weaknesses of cases. He brings patience, persistence, empathy, trust, and a solutions-oriented mindset to every mediation.

### LEGAL CAREER & PRIOR EXPERIENCE

- Full-time Neutral, Judicate West (2024-Present)
- Judge, Orange County Superior Court (2009-2024); Family Law and Probate Departments
- Partner, Law Offices of Kuhn & Belz (1998-2009); Handled a variety of personal injury cases including vehicular accidents, premises liability, government liability, excessive force and police shootings, product liability, medical malpractice, elder abuse, and federal maritime cases.
- Sole Practitioner, Law Offices of David L. Belz (1995-1998)
- Partner and Managing Attorney, Law Offices of Landgren & Belz (1981-1995)
- Partner, Law Offices of Giles, Callahan, McCune, Willis & Edwards (1976-1981)

### EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- J.D., Pepperdine University School of Law (1975)
- B.A., California State University, Fullerton (1972)
- Mediating the Litigated Case, Straus Institute, Pepperdine University School of Law (2000)
- Teaching Faculty Member for Judicial Council's Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER) in both Family Law and Probate Law (2013-2024)
- Appointed to the Judicial Council's Probate and Mental Health Advisory Committee (2021)

- Teaching Faculty, Training for judges newly appointed to probate and family law courts
- Orange County Trial Lawyers, Board Member (1990-1994; 1999-2009)
- St. Thomas More Society of Orange County, Founding Member and President (1994-2004)

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## PRACTICE AREAS

All types of Personal Injury including Wrongful Death; Elder Care Law; Family Law; Maritime & Admiralty; Medical Malpractice; Probate/Trust & Estate

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## ACHIEVEMENTS & AWARDS

- St. Thomas More Society Award (2002)
- J. Reuben Clark Law Society Award -Service, Personal Integrity & Professional Excellence (2018)

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## HOBBIES & INTERESTS

Judge Belz has an athletic background, having played high school and college basketball. He has been an avid golfer since high school. He strives to live a healthy personal and professional life by balancing his family, spiritual, and professional life. He is an admirer and student of St.Thomas More, the subject of the 1966 Academy Award-winning best picture, "A Man for All Seasons".

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## LOCATIONS

Orange County, Southern California