

## Signature Resolution Adds Ex-LA Judge To Mediation Bench

By James Mills

*Law360 (May 5, 2022, 4:01 PM EDT)* -- Signature Resolution, an alternative dispute resolution center, has added a newly retired Los Angeles County Superior Court judge to its team of mediators.

Judge Daniel Buckley, who retired from the bench on Monday at age 67 after serving 20 years as a Superior Court Judge, will join Signature, the center announced on Tuesday. A graduate of University of Notre Dame, the Law School, he spent the first part of his career as a general civil litigation defense attorney with a focus in the areas of toxic torts, professional negligence, personal injury and insurance coverage. He became a judge in 2002 and loved every minute of it.



Daniel Buckley

"I thought they would carry me out of the courthouse because I loved being a judge so much," Judge Buckley told Law360 Pulse on Thursday morning. "In the last year, my colleagues in the complex civil department sent me large, complicated cases to try to settle. I realized that I enjoyed that type of work and that I would enjoy the private judging and doing mediations. That pushed me over the edge to decide to retire and go into the private world."

He's glad he decided to join Signature, which was founded in 2017 and now has offices in downtown Los Angeles in the US Bank building as well as in Century City and San Diego.

"It was a tough decision, there are some very good [dispute settlement] firms out there," Judge Buckley said. "I realized that the chemistry at Signature was right. That made it attractive, and I had previous good relationships with the founders. Once my retirement was announced, it was solidified by the fact almost every lawyer who said something about where I might be going, said, 'I assume you're going to Signature.'"

Dario Higuchi, Signature Resolution's founding partner and managing member, is delighted to have him join.

"Judge Buckley brings tremendous experience to our Signature Resolution panel, particularly following his prestigious role as the presiding judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, the largest court in the country," Higuchi said in a statement. "In addition to his impressive background, Judge Buckley is well known for his ability to truly listen to both parties before making a more objective

evaluation of the case. His uncanny knack for understanding a case's strengths and weaknesses and his extensive experience makes him an ideal neutral."

Although a majority of Signature's arbitration sessions are held virtually these days, Judge Buckley expects to get into the office in downtown LA several days of the week, even if the sessions are virtual.

Judge Buckley is quite accustomed to handling virtual sessions since, in the last two years, most courts went virtual thanks to the coronavirus pandemic hitting in March 2020. In fact, he's one of the people responsible for making sure Los Angeles County Superior Courtrooms had that technology to do virtual hearings. While he served as presiding judge for the LA County Superior Courts in 2017-18, he made it a priority to get the technology up to date in the county's 550+ courtrooms.

Judge Buckley spent his entire litigation career at the Los Angeles firm Breidenbach Buckley Huchting Halm & Hamblet LLP. He litigated several landmark cases in the country, including *Newman v. Stringfellow*, which was considered the largest toxic tort case in the early 1990s with more than 4,000 plaintiffs. Judge Buckley was also a co-lead trial attorney for the State of California in a year-long trial with 17 bellwether plaintiffs.

He was happy being an attorney, but a friend encouraged him to apply to be a judge.

"A friend of mine was appointed [to the bench] back in 2001. I went to a Dodger game with her husband, and he encouraged me to apply to be a judge," he said. "I responded that I didn't think I had the connections to the governor or bar groups to be appointed. He reassured me that the governor would appoint good lawyers. So, I applied. It all went very well for me, and I was appointed in 2002."

Now that he's entering a new phase of his legal career, he said his philosophy is to let people talk out their grievances.

"I believe in giving people time to talk and hearing them out," he said. "I want them to feel they got their day in court. From there, I'm able to tell them where their strengths and weaknesses lie and advise them on the best course of action. I'm pleased to join Signature Resolution and continue my work helping parties resolve their disputes."

--Editing by Alex Hubbard.