



NEWS RELEASE

Board of Supervisors

CONTACT:

David Wert
Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4842
dwert@sbcounty.gov

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Board of Supervisors appoints Thomas Sone as Public Defender



The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday appointed interim Public Defender Thomas Sone to serve as the county's new Public Defender.

"We are very fortunate to have someone with Tom's credentials, experience, and dedication on our team," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman.

Sone has served as interim Public Defender since December and previously served as Assistant Public Defender. He joined the Public Defender's Office in 2001 after briefly working for a private law firm in Los Angeles. Sone began with the County as a Deputy Public Defender I and worked his way up to the position of Lead Deputy Public Defender V before being named Chief Deputy Public Defender in 2013 and Assistant Public Defender in 2018.

Along the way, Sone litigated serious and complex felony cases, trained and mentored newer attorneys, assigned cases, participated in community programs, and collaborated with various agencies to develop programs that better deliver services to our community.

"The Public Defender's Office and this county hold a very special place in my heart," Sone said. "For the past 20 years within the department, I've grown not just professionally but also as a person. Both the leadership of this department as well as this county have shaped who I've become. I am humbled and honored by the appointment."

Sone is the county's first Asian American and Pacific Islander Public Defender. He received his Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego, School of Law and holds two Bachelor's degrees from Washington State University. He is also a graduate of the San Bernardino County Management and Leadership Academy.

The Public Defender provides legal representation to criminal or civil commitment defendants who cannot afford to hire an attorney. The office represents adults and juveniles charged with misdemeanor or felony crimes, and persons facing involuntary civil commitment for mental disorders or commitment under the Sexually Violent Predator statute.

In addition to attorneys, the San Bernardino County Public Defender employs investigators to fully investigate cases handled by the department. The Department also has a staff of social workers and support staff to provide the best representation for clients.

Using a holistic approach, the Public Defender seeks to increase client opportunities for achieving self-sufficiency. In addition to providing legal defense, the office also seeks to arrange client access to social service programs and assistance with receiving alcohol and drug rehabilitation services and counseling for mental health issues.