

Demmeier Running for Judge in Merced County – 2/14/24 – *Merced Sun-Star*

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Who will be next judge? Three candidates vie for Merced County Superior Court

BY ANDREW KUHN FEBRUARY 14, 2024 10:49 AM The Merced County Superior Courthouse in Merced, Calif., on Wednesday, Aug. 16, 2023. ANDREW KUHN akuhn@mercedsun-star.com Merced County has three candidates vying for a Merced County Superior Court Judge seat in the upcoming March 5 primary election. Attorney Monika Saini-Donabed, a Livingston native and graduate of the University of California, Davis, School of Law. Attorney Regina Adams, and current Judge Carlos Dammeier.

Saini-Donabed, a Judicial Staff Attorney for Merced County Superior Court and temporary judge, holds a Juris Doctor; Public Service Law Certificate from the University of California, Davis and is a founding member of the South Asian Bar Association of Central Valley.

Regina Adams is a graduate of the New England School of Law, Boston and is a private attorney as well as a contract public defender in Merced and Madera counties. Current State of California Administrative Law Judge, Carlos Dammeier, holds a Juris Doctor from Western State College of Law and previously served as both a police officer and sheriff's deputy.



Monika Saini-Donabed, 40. Image courtesy of Monika Saini-Donabed. Andrew Kuhn akuhn@mercedsun-star.com

Monika Saini-Donabed Age: 40 Birthplace: Merced Current town of residence: Merced Current occupation: Judicial Staff Attorney for Merced County Superior Court. In that capacity, serving as a temporary judge as needed by the court. Education: Livingston High School Diploma, University of California, Davis -Bachelor of Art-History and Political Science. University of California, Davis-Juris Doctor; Public Service Law Certificate. Officers held: South Asian Bar Association of Central Valley, Founding Member and Vice President, 2023-present. Merced County Bar Association, Secretary, 2023; Treasurer, 2022. Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs (APAPA)-Merced County, Secretary 2022-2023. Merced County Unity Bar, Founding Member and Director of Mentorship Program with UC Merced Pre-Law Society, 2022-2023. Merced County Indian Chambers of Commerce, Past President, 2019-2022. City of Merced Arts and Culture Commissioner, 2018-2022. Merced Women Lawyers Association, Secretary, 2014.

Campaign website: <https://donabedforjudge.com/>

Q. What do you feel are the most important issues Merced County is currently facing? I am precluded from answering this question as it relates to issues/policies.

Q. If elected, what will be our top three priorities as Merced County Superior Court Judge? If elected, my top three priorities as Merced County Superior Court Judge will be the same priorities I have as a Judge Pro Tempore. A top priority for me is the faithful and impartial administration of justice. I believe pursuing accountability with fair and just resolutions is fundamental to upholding faith and trust in the judiciary. As such, I will continue to apply the particular facts of each case to the applicable law in a fair and equal manner to get just results. Secondly, I will continue to prioritize equal access to justice. I would ensure that all parties are provided with the necessary resources, such as the proper interpreter, so they can fully understand and participate in the process. I will patiently work to ensure all parties in court understand the process, their rights, and how to exercise them. The court system can be daunting and overwhelming. As a judicial officer, I will try to demystify the proceedings and provide a road map of what to expect and when. This requires patience and cultural sensitivity. Finally, I will ensure a courtroom environment where all parties are treated with dignity and respect, while given the equal opportunity to be heard.

Q. What are the biggest challenges the criminal justice system faces today? The biggest challenges the criminal justice system faces, in the context of the courts, are a shortage of judges, lack of modern and adequate facilities, and underfunded programs. This is not limited to the criminal court system, this applies to the court system as a whole.



Carlos Dammeier, 55. Image courtesy of Carlos Dammeier. Andrew Kuhn akuhn@mercedsunstar.com

Carlos Dammeier Age: 55 Birthplace: California Current occupation: Administrative Law Judge, State of California Education: Juris Doctor from Western State College of Law (graduated top 5% of class) Offices held: Administrative Law Judge, State of California. Judge Pro Tem, Superior Court. Police Officer. Deputy Sheriff.

Campaign website: dammeier4judge.com

Q. What do you feel are the most important issues Merced County is currently facing? The same as most places today. Crime, homelessness, and the economy. As a former police officer and now judge, I have seen the problems we face and do my part to make them better. Merced County is a great community and I have faith we can solve the problems to continue to make it a better place to live, work and play.

Q. If elected, what will be your top three priorities as Merced County Superior Court Judge? I will continue to do what I do now as a judge. First priority, always be fair. Treat everyone with respect, take the time to make sure everyone is heard and carefully consider the law and facts in every case. This of course requires the elimination of any bias in the courtroom to ensure everyone is treated equally. Secondly, expedite justice. Litigants wait far too long to get cases resolved. I will take steps to make sure my cases are completed no longer than a year after filing, preferably much sooner. Third, safeguard the community. As a former police officer, I was not a fan of seeing repeat offenders put back on the street only to continue victimizing the community. There is a balance, however. We are all humans and do make mistakes, especially

when growing up. This requires a thoughtful and stern, yet compassionate balance, understanding that the community's safety will always weigh most heavy in that consideration.

Q. What are the biggest challenges the criminal justice system faces today? Many people, right or wrong, have lost faith in our criminal justice system. I have seen it close and personal as a police officer and can tell you that 99% of those working in the system are good people doing a hard job to keep us safe from the worst among us. We can and must do better to restore the public's faith in the system. This will require all of us in it to continue to make it better. Making sure the police, prosecutors and courts have the resources needed to get the job done is also critical. Above all, we must do our jobs with integrity, fairness, respect and compassion, realizing we are dealing with people in traumatic and tough circumstances.



Regina Adams, 38. Image courtesy of Regina Adams. Andrew Kuhn akuhn@mercedsun-star.com

Regina Adams Age: 38 Birthplace: Phoenix Arizona Current town of residence: Merced Current occupation: Private attorney and contract public defender in Merced and Madera counties. Education: New England School of Law, Boston-J.D.. Bachelor of Arts in History and Bachelor of Arts in Individual Studies with a Major in Civil Rights and Civil Liberties in American Law from University of California, San Diego.

Campaign website: <https://simplebooklet.com/votereginaadams#page=1>

Q. What do you feel are the most important issues Merced County is currently facing? - a lack of early intervention for youthful offenders - public safety needs

Q. If elected, what will be your top three priorities as Merced County Superior Court Judge? 1) To uphold the laws of the state of California, the California Constitution, and the U.S. Constitution 2) To ensure that justice is a priority 3) To ensure that our bench is a reflection of our community and its values

Q. What are the biggest challenges the criminal justice system faces today? - The backlog of cases is compounded by a shortage of attorneys in the field - addressing systemic biases and inequities - recidivism rates

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