

SILICON VALLEY JUDGE RETIRES AMID DISCLOSURE SCANDAL



Santa Clara County Court Judge and BBMP co-chair, James Towery, having dinner at the December 2016, Santa Clara County Bar Association Family Law holiday party. (Photo by Stephen James)

By [Robert JHansen](#)  April 19, 2023  1 comments



Santa Clara County Court Judge and BBMP co-chair, James Towery, having dinner at the December 2016, Santa Clara County Bar Association Family Law holiday party. (Photo by Stephen James)

By Robert J. Hansen & Susan Bassi

Santa Clara Superior Court has announced the termination of the controversial Bench-Bar-Media-Police Committee (BBMP), and that the committee's most recent chairperson, Judge James Towery, will officially retire from the bench on May 17, 2023.

The Vanguard requested access to BBMP meetings, prompting the court's response that the BBMP no longer is active.

The Santa Clara BBMP is a by-invitation, members-only, off-the-record group of attorneys, judges, media professionals and government officials that have met behind closed doors for over thirty years.

Towery attended the BBMP as guest speaker while he was president of the local bar association in 1989. He remained an active member of the BBMP, attending regularly from then on.

Two years after he was appointed to the bench, Judge Towery co-chaired the BBMP from 2014-2022.

The court did not provide information to explain why the BBMP was shuttered in 2022, shortly after the BBMP records were produced to the Vanguard.

The Vanguard first reported on the BBMP after Santa Clara County Court Judge Carol Overton disclosed the existence of the committee during a restraining order hearing between the San Jose Mercury News and a former employee, [Paul Gackle](#).

The goals [of the BBMP] were to “host dinner meeting programs five times a year with topics that have a cross-appeal between the core constituencies, which are the Bench, members of the Bar Association, media and law enforcement,” [according to a description](#) by Santa Clara Judge James Towery and Judge Lori Pegg.



The outcomes of certain cases in Santa Clara County point to the possibility that BBMP members have received preferential treatment, particularly prosecutors and divorce attorneys, from the courts and that judges do not make the required conflict of interest disclosures about the relationships to opposing attorneys and parties.

Yet to be determined is how many and which litigants over the years were denied due process or otherwise adversely affected by secret court-conducted BBMP “backroom” arrangements with selected “favorite” attorneys or by surreptitious select media coverage.

In 2010 Towery accepted employment with the State Bar of California. A time when the scandal related to disbarred and bankrupted Los Angeles attorney Thomas Girardi unfolded, as reported by the Los Angeles Times.

[According to a California Bar report on](#) Girardi, Towery was Chief Trial Counsel (CTC) for the Bar during one investigation into Girardi.

Towery reportedly recused from the Girardi investigation, but appointed an outside attorney to investigate the Girardi complaint as referred by the Ninth Circuit Federal Court of Appeal in 2010.

By all accounts, the attorney Towery appointed mishandled the referred complaint by improperly determining that no discipline should be imposed on Girardi.

“There are a series of issues that arose as a result of the attorney’s work on the Girardi case,” the report said.

According to a profile published by the Daily Journal, Towery fought to keep the State Bar group intact, delivering an estimated 80 speeches on the issue to bar associations around the state, spending 120 nights in hotels.

Grand Juror Karyn Sinunu-Towery is a former Santa Clara county prosecutor who unsuccessfully ran for district attorney in 2006, [The Silicon Valley Voice reported](#).

She is married to Judge Towery, who also was employed by Hoge Fenton in 2010 during the Cedar Fair litigation

Sinunu-Towery worked with District Attorney Jeff Rosen, as she and James Towery endorsed Rosen's campaigns for election and re-election over the past decade.

Judge Towery was also DA Rosen's attorney in a 2010 action about Rosen's campaign statement, according to the Silicon Valley Voice.

Since her retirement from the District Attorney's office in 2013, Siunu-Towery has reportedly volunteered for the Northern California Innocence Project and while serving as a BBMP member at her husband's invitation.

The Vanguard has requested records that would reveal how and why the BBMP was shuttered, but the records had not been produced at the time of publication.



Categories:

[BREAKING NEWS](#)[EVERYDAY INJUSTICE](#)

Tags:

[BBMP](#)[JEFF ROSEN](#)[JUDGE JAMES TOWERY](#)

AUTHOR



[Robert JHansen](#)

Robert J Hansen is an investigative journalist and economist. Robert is covering the Yolo County DA's race for the Vanguard.

[VIEW ALL POSTS](#)

1 COMMENT



Thygesen v Wang says:

April 19, 2023 at 6:26 pm

April 19, 2023

Silicon Valley Judge Retires Amid Disclosure

Scandal | Davis Vanguard

Santa Clara Superior Court has announced the termination of the controversial Bench-Bar-Media-Police Committee (BBMP), and that the committee's most recent chairperson, Judge James Towery, will officially retire from the bench on May 17, 2023.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KDZW0onXndvVAW47-XIUs9A8i056cztq/view?usp=sharing>

[Log in to Reply](#) [Ignore](#)

Leave a Comment

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.

RECENT POSTS

We need your help—\$5,000 by October 31

The Vanguard is asking for donations to raise \$2,000 this week to pay off bills from a recent legal battle.

Thousands Rally in San Francisco to 'Free the Bay' from Federal Deployment

Thousands of residents, workers, and faith leaders gathered in downtown San Francisco to protest the potential deployment of federal troops to the city, demanding that the Trump administration keep its troops out of the Bay Area and provide more resources to the community.

Palo Alto Study Finds Downtown Housing Unfeasible in Current Market, Highlighting California's Broader Housing Gridlock

The Housing Development Economic Feasibility and Implementation Analysis for Palo Alto has concluded that not a single development prototype would be financially viable under current market conditions, reflecting the broader economic and policy gridlock paralyzing housing production across California.

Justice Sotomayor Issues Scathing Dissent over Alabama Nitrogen Gas Execution

Justice Sonia Sotomayor condemned the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to stay the execution of Anthony Boyd, who was put to death in Alabama using nitrogen gas, calling it "torturous suffocation" and a violation of the Eighth Amendment's guarantee against cruel and unusual punishment.

Vanguard Incarcerated Press – July 2025

The July edition of the Vanguard Incarcerated Press features stories from incarcerated individuals that expose the cruelty of the prison system and highlight the resilience of those who endure it, while also advocating for free speech, human rights, and prison reform.



The People's Vanguard of Davis

P.O. Box 4715

Davis, CA 95617

916-970-3131

info@davisvanguard.org

COMPANY

- › [About Us](#)
- › [Our Mission](#)
- › [Editorial Board](#)

QUICK LINKS

- › Court Watch
- › Archives
- › Submissions
- › Editorial Board
- › Comment Policy

ABOUT

The Vanguard provides the Davis Community with incisive in-depth coverage of local government on a wide variety of issues. Since 2006, The Vanguard has provided Davis and Yolo County with some of the best groundbreaking news coverage on local government and policy issues affecting our city, our schools, the county, and the Sacramento Region.

© 2025 Vanguard News Group. All Rights Reserved. Website Development by Uptown Studios