

= Ronald M. George =

Ronald Marc George (born March 11 , 1940) is the retired 27th Chief Justice of California , where he headed the Supreme Court of California and the Judicial Council of California . Governor Pete Wilson appointed George as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court in 1991 and elevated George to Chief Justice in 1996 .

= = Education and early career = =

Ron George grew up in Beverly Hills , the son of a Hungarian immigrant mother and French immigrant father . A 1957 graduate of Beverly Hills High School , George earned his B.A. from Princeton University in 1961 and his J.D. from Stanford Law School in 1964 .

Upon graduating from Stanford , George was a Deputy California Attorney General from 1965 ? 1972 . As a Deputy Attorney General , he argued unsuccessfully on behalf of the State of California before the United States Supreme Court in *Chimel v. California* in 1969 . The following year , he again represented California before the U.S. Supreme Court , this time successfully defending the death penalty in *McGautha v. California* . In 1971 , he represented California as an *amicus curiae* in support of the successful argument of the State of Illinois in *Kirby v. Illinois* .

In 1972 , his final year as a Deputy Attorney General , George unsuccessfully argued in favor of the death penalty before the California Supreme Court in *California v. Anderson* but was successful in defending the conviction of Sirhan Sirhan in the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy , a U.S. Senator and 1968 presidential candidate . The ruling in *California v. Anderson* resulted in the dismissal of *Aikens v. California* as moot ; George was to have represented the State of California in this case .

= = Early judicial career = =

Governor Ronald Reagan appointed George as a Judge of the Los Angeles Municipal Court on April 20 , 1972 . George was elected to a full six @-@ year term on November 2 , 1976 . Governor Jerry Brown appointed him to the Los Angeles County Superior Court on December 23 , 1977 ; George was elected to a full six @-@ year term on November 7 , 1978 , and re @-@ elected on November 6 , 1984 .

As a Superior Court judge , George presided over the trial of Hillside Strangler Angelo Buono in 1981 ? 1983 . George also presided over the trial of Marvin Gay , Sr. for the slaying of Gay 's son , the singer Marvin Gaye . George was lauded for his extremely unusual decision to deny the motion by Los Angeles County District Attorney 's office to dismiss all 10 counts of murder against Buono . However , his unusual decision was speculated to be a result of his earlier decision to separate crucial counts of rape and sodomy , which in themselves would serve as evidence against the defendant , from the murder charges . The prosecutors felt the evidence against Buono was so weak that it did not justify even an attempt to win at trial . Judges rarely second @-@ guess the prosecutors ' judgment on such a matter (and George stated that he was " loath " to do so) . However , George 's review of the evidence in the case caused him to feel so strongly that the prosecutors were in error that he did exactly that . George reassigned the case to the California Attorney General 's office , and that office successfully convicted Buono on nine of the 10 counts . Thus , it was recognized that the judge , through his action to deny the earlier motion to dismiss , had ultimately prevented a serial killer from going free . Oddly , Los Angeles County District Attorney John Van de Kamp had been elected California Attorney General in the middle of the lengthy trial , so a Van de Kamp @-@ led District Attorney 's office attempted to dismiss the unwinnable case only to have a Van de Kamp @-@ led Attorney General 's office win nine convictions in the case .

Governor George Deukmejian appointed him to the California Second District Court of Appeal on July 23 , 1987 . George was confirmed and sworn in on August 27 , 1987 , and was elected to a full twelve @-@ year term on November 6 , 1990 .

= = Supreme Court = =

Governor Pete Wilson appointed Justice Ron George to the California Supreme Court on July 29 , 1991 . George was confirmed and sworn in as an Associate Justice on September 3 , 1991 . California voters elected him to a full twelve @-@ year term on November 8 , 1994 . Wilson appointed George as the 27th Chief Justice of California on March 28 , 1996 . George was confirmed and sworn into office on May 1 , 1996 . He was elected to a full twelve @-@ year term on November 3 , 1998 , with 75 @. @ 5 % percent of the vote .

George was occasionally floated as a candidate for justice of the United States Supreme Court as a conservative acceptable to Democrats , such as when Democratic United States Senator Barbara Boxer suggested George as a potential nominee for the seat on the Court vacated by Sandra Day O 'Connor 's retirement . Boxer described both George and his fellow California Supreme Court Justice Kathryn Werdegard , as Republicans who " reflect the spirit of Sandra Day O 'Connor 's tenure ? independent and nonideological . "

In 2008 , Justice George authored the opinion in the Supreme Court 's 4 @-@ 3 ruling in In re Marriage Cases legalizing same @-@ sex marriage in California . Citing the court 's 1948 decision legalizing interracial marriages , George 's opinion found that sexual orientation is a protected class like race and gender , meaning that attempts to ban same @-@ sex marriage would be subject to strict scrutiny under the Equal Protection Clause of the California Constitution . It was the first state high court in the country to do so . Voters would overturn the decision less than six months later by passing Proposition 8 in the November 2008 elections . However , Proposition 8 would itself be later overturned by a Federal Court in Perry v. Schwarzenegger and In Re Marriage Cases reinstated as valid constitutional law in California .

On July 14 , 2010 , Justice George announced he would not seek to be re @-@ elected in 2010 and would therefore retire at the end of his term : January 2 , 2011 . He was succeeded by Tani Cantil @-@ Sakauye .