

We Are Here to Protect Your Rights

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When a dispute arises between landlord and tenant, employer and employee, or other potential antagonists, the parties may end up in court. They may hope for judges and jurors who are predisposed to favor their viewpoint – a jury of renters; a “pro-management judge” – but our sophisticated legal system is designed to give all participants a level playing field. Judicial decisions may not be based on bias, personal beliefs or fear of public opinion. Rather, our judges and jurors are sworn to keep an open mind, listen to all the evidence, and base their decisions on the facts and the law. Sometimes the landlord wins, and sometimes the tenant wins. Regardless of who prevails, our system guarantees equal access to the courts for all.

But some special interest groups don't like it that way. They want to win at all costs. When they don't get what they want in court, they take their story to the public. The story they tell can be one-sided, misleading and sensational.

Across the nation and here in Marin, judges have increasingly become targets for special interest groups. In addition to promoting their cause, these groups may be trying to develop name recognition or build their client base. They have discovered that a well-funded attack on the judiciary lands them right where they want to be – on the front page.

The First Amendment allows these groups to say whatever they please, no matter how inaccurate or unfair the charges. At the same time, the Judicial Canons of Ethics prohibit judges from responding to attacks, no matter how untrue or personal. Judges, unlike other public figures, may not call press conferences to explain or defend their rulings. Rather, judges must remain outside of the fray and may speak about cases only in court when all sides are present.

Courts are accountable to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, not to special interest groups, no matter how loudly they shout. A litigant who is dissatisfied with the result of a court case has many legal options, including appeal. Personal attacks on judges are nothing more than

intimidation tactics – as inappropriate in a democracy as they are on a playground. Were judges to yield to such intimidation, the bully would win in court every time.

Our courts deserve the public's trust and confidence. Our judiciary is, and must remain, impartial and accountable, free from political interference, immune to special interest groups bent on obtaining a specific result regardless of the law.

Whether you find yourself in court as landlord or tenant, employer or employee, or cast in another adversarial role, your courts will ensure that all sides have access to the law. The judge or jury will render a decision based on the facts and the law – not on biases, threats or popularity. We are here to serve you.