

Judge Victoria Kolakowski

Judge Victoria Kolakowski is the first openly transgender trial judge in the United States; she was elected to the Alameda County Superior Court in November 2010. Judge Kolakowski is the President of the International Association of LGBT Judges.

As a judge, she has served in both civil and criminal trial assignments. She currently presides over a civil calendar, handling cases from filing through trial.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts in natural sciences degree from New College of Florida, a Master of Science in bio-medical engineering from Tulane University, a Master of Science in electrical engineering from the University of New Orleans, a joint Juris Doctor and Master of Public Administration (emphasis on budget and finance) from Louisiana State University, and a Master of Divinity from the Pacific School of Religion.

Prior to her election, Judge Kolakowski was an attorney for twenty one years in Louisiana and California, serving as a sole practitioner, attorney in a small firm, as general counsel for a publicly traded company, as a senior government utility regulatory attorney, and as an administrative law judge for two different California state agencies.

Since coming out publicly in 1989, she has been a leader in numerous local, state and national LGBT legal, political and spiritual organizations. She is a frequent guest speaker on issues of LGBT inclusion, and particularly about the transgender community. Her many accomplishments include co-authoring Berkeley, California's domestic partner public registration ordinance in 1991 and co-chairing the board of directors of the Transgender Law Center, an organization focused on the well-being and protection of transgender individuals.

Judge Kolakowski is passionate about ensuring and expanding access to justice, particularly for those with limited resources. She serves on the Judicial Council of California's Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness.

She is a retired minister of the Metropolitan Community Churches. She published the first article on transgender inclusion in the Christian tradition in a mainstream academic religious journal. She previously served on the board of directors of the California Council of Churches, and currently serves as its representative to the California Commission on Access to Justice, where she co-chairs its court fees committee.

In 2011, Judge Kolakowski served as a Community Grand Marshal for San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride, was named by the Equality Forum as one of 31 international Icons for LGBT History Month, and received Equality California's Equality and Justice Award. In 2012, she received the Vanguard Award from the Transgender Law Center. November 23, 2013 was declared "Judge Victoria Kolakowski Day" in Palm Springs, California. In 2014, she received the first "Pioneer in the Law

Award” from California Women Lawyers, was the honored guest of Transgender Equality Network Ireland at Dublin Pride, and was Special Guest at Greater Palm Springs (California) Pride. In 2015 she was honored by the Alameda County Bar Association with its annual Distinguished Service Award for a Judge. And finally, in 2016 she was honored by the Veterans for Peace – Inland Empire (California).

She lives in Oakland, California with her wife Cynthia Laird (news editor for the Bay Area Reporter newspaper, the oldest continuously published LGBT newspaper in the U.S.), their Pembroke Welsh Corgi Darby, and cat Espresso.