



CITY OF RIVERSIDE

CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

OVER ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE

(1883-Present)

DEDICATION

This historical brochure is dedicated to the men and women who have professionally served in the Riverside City Attorney's Office and personally contributed to the character and development of the City since 1883.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The City of Riverside was incorporated in 1883; it became a charter city in 1907 when the first Charter was adopted on March 5, 1907. Historical documents show that the first City Attorney was appointed in 1886. The City Attorney's Office was formally established in the original Charter adopted in 1907. Although the City Charter has been amended several times through the years, there has always been a provision for the Office of City Attorney.

CURRENT MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City Attorney's Office is to provide excellent and ethical legal advice, effective legal representation, and other quality legal services for the City Council, City officers, and City employees in order that they may lawfully attain the City Council's goals and other department program outcomes without undue risk to the City.

**CITY ATTORNEY AUTHORITY
UNDER THE CURRENT CITY CHARTER**

City of Riverside Charter Section 702:

To become eligible for City Attorney, the person appointed shall be an attorney-at-law duly licensed as such under the laws of the State of California, and shall have been engaged in the practice of law for at least five years prior to appointment.

The City Attorney shall have power and may be required to:

- (a) Represent and advise the City Council and all City officers in all matters of law pertaining to their offices.
- (b) Represent and appear for the City in any or all actions or proceedings in which the City is concerned or is a party, and represent and appear for any City officer or employee, or former City officer or employee, in any and all actions and proceedings in which any such officer or employee is concerned or is a party for any act arising out of such officer's or employee's employment or by reason of such officer's or employee's official capacity.
- (c) Attend all regular meetings of the City Council and give advice or opinion in writing whenever requested to do so by the City Council or by any of the boards or officers of the City.
- (d) Approve the form of all contracts made by and all bonds given to the City, endorsing the City Attorney's approval thereon in writing.
- (e) Prepare any and all proposed ordinances or resolutions for the City and amendments thereto.
- (f) Surrender to the City Attorney's successor all books, papers, files and documents pertaining to the City's affairs.

The City Council shall have control of all legal business and proceedings and may employ other attorneys to take charge of any litigation or matter or to assist the City Attorney therein.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF CITY ATTORNEYS

G. W. Monteith: 5/3/1886 - 6/21/1887

H. L. Hilbard: 12/5/1887 - 12/27/1888

W. J. McIntyre: 1/1/1889 – unknown

William Gage Irving: 1910 - unknown

Miguel Estudillo: 1918 - unknown

George A. French: 1924 - 1927

Walter Davidson: 1/2/1928 - 12/31/1928

Seymore Joseph: 1/3/1929 - 3/4/1929

Eugene Best: 3/5/1929 - 1/1/1941

Eugene Best was the son of Raymond Best, who started the Best, Best & Krieger law firm. Raymond purchased the law library of John G. North, son of John W. North, one of the founders of Riverside.

Eugene Best obtained an engineering degree from Stanford in 1915 and began to study law and abstract titles. Mr. Best never attended law school but passed the bar in 1918 and was admitted to practice. Mr. Best assisted in his father's practice for several years and became a partner in 1925.

Eugene Best was appointed City Attorney in 1929 and served until 1941.

Miguel Estudillo: 1918 and 1/7/1941 - 3/1/49

Miguel Estudillo began his long career of public service as Deputy Court Clerk of San Diego County. When Riverside County was established in 1893, Mr. Estudillo was appointed Clerk of the Board of Supervisors and was soon after admitted to law practice. Mr. Estudillo was elected to the California State Assembly in 1904 and to the State Senate in 1908.

Miguel Estudillo was appointed City Attorney for the City of Riverside on two occasions, one in 1918 and another in 1941. Mr. Estudillo retired from his second appointment in 1949.

Harry Dougherty: 3/8/1949 - 1/18/1952.

Harry Dougherty started in the City Attorney's Office as an Assistant City Attorney in 1942 and worked until 1957. During his time at the City Attorney's Office, Mr. Dougherty was City Attorney from 1949 to 1952.

Albert Ford: 1/18/1952 - 9/15/1958

Albert Ford was born in Riverside and graduated from Riverside Polytechnic High School. He was awarded a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Southern California.

In 1915, Mr. Ford began his law practice in Riverside and in 1922 was hired as a Deputy District Attorney for Riverside County. Mr. Ford was appointed District Attorney by the board of Supervisors in September, 1925; he was elected for a four-term in 1926 and declined to run in 1930.

Mr. Ford returned to private practice and also served as a United States Referee in Bankruptcy Proceedings from 1932 to 1941.

In 1941, Mr. Ford was hired as Assistant City Attorney for the City of Riverside. Mr. Ford was appointed City Attorney by the Riverside City Council in 1952, a position he held until his resignation in June, 1958.

Leo Deegan: 9/15/1958 - 11/4/1959

Leo Deegan was born in Hemet, California, and graduated from Loyola High School. Mr. Deegan attended Loyola University, graduating in 1936, and obtaining the university's law degree in 1939. Mr. Deegan spent five years in private practice with the Los Angeles firm of O'Melveny and Myers.

Mr. Deegan came to Riverside in 1946 as a deputy in the District Attorney's Office. Mr. Deegan was Assistant District Attorney when, in 1948, he was appointed by the Board of Supervisors as Riverside County's first Public Defender, a position he held for one year. In 1949, Mr. Deegan transferred to the County Counsel's Office where he remained until leaving in 1951 to enter private law practice. Mr. Deegan returned to the District Attorney's Office as Assistant District Attorney in early 1953. In December of that year, Mr. Deegan returned to the County Counsel's Office as Chief Deputy. Mr. Deegan held the position of Chief Deputy County Counsel until 1958 when he accepted the position of City Attorney for the City of Riverside.

Governor Edmund Brown appointed Leo Deegan to the Superior Court in 1959 where he served until his retirement in 1975. During the next 10 years, Judge Deegan was assigned to twenty different northern counties in California for Superior Court work. During 1988-1989, Judge Deegan served for 14 months on the Court of Appeal, 3rd Appellate District in Sacramento.

The Leo A. Deegan American Inn of Court is a local chapter of the American Inns of Court formally organized in 1985. American Inns of Court are designed to improve the skills, professionalism and ethics of the bench and bar. The Mission of the American Inns of Court is to foster excellence in professionalism, ethics, civility, and legal skills. American Inns of Court actively involve more than 20,000 state, federal and administrative law judges, attorneys, legal scholars and third-year law students. Membership is composed of the following categories: Masters of the Bench--judges, experienced lawyers, and law professors; Barristers--lawyers with some experience who do not meet the minimum requirements for Masters; Associates--lawyers who do not meet the minimum requirement for Barristers; and Pupils--third-year law students.

The suggested number of active members in an Inn is around 80. The membership is divided into “pupillage teams,” with each team consisting of a few members from each membership category. Each pupillage team conducts one program for the Inn each year.

Lee Thompson: 11/5/1959 - 6/30/1965

Lee Thompson began his career with the City of Riverside as the City Prosecutor on October 1, 1958, and in 1959, he was appointed City Attorney.

John Woodhead: 7/1/1965 – 3/31/1992

John Woodhead received his undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1951. Mr. Woodhead served in the U. S. Army from 1953 until 1955. In 1958, Mr. Woodhead received his Juris Doctorate from Hastings College of Law in San Francisco.

After graduation from law school, Mr. Woodhead worked as a deputy counsel for the Riverside County Counsel’s Office. In 1962, Mr. Woodhead was hired as an assistant city attorney for the City of Riverside. In 1965, Mr. Woodhead was appointed City Attorney and continued to act as City Attorney until his retirement in 1992.

Stan Yamamoto: 9/25/1992 - 8/2/2001

Stan Yamamoto received his undergraduate degree from San Jose State University and his Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Santa Clara School of Law. Prior to becoming the City Attorney for the City of Riverside, he was an administrative assistant in the City of Sunnyvale and a staff attorney in Modesto before his appointment as City Attorney for Modesto.

In 1997, Mr. Yamamoto was honored as Management Leader of the Year (Public Sector) by the University of California, Riverside, A. Gary Anderson Graduate School of Management.

Gregory Priamos: 8/3/2001 – 7/14/14

Gregory Priamos received his undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Southern California and his Juris Doctorate degree from Loyola Law School.

Before coming to Riverside he was a senior associate with Burke, Williams & Sorenson, a municipal law firm in Los Angeles. While at Burke, Williams & Sorenson, he represented numerous public entities.

Mr. Priamos began his career as an Assistant City Attorney III with the City of Riverside in 1993. In 1995, he became the Supervising Deputy City Attorney in charge of the Litigation Services Section. On July 24, 2001, he was appointed Interim City Attorney by the City Council and began his duties on August 3, 2001. On July 23, 2002, Mr. Priamos was appointed City Attorney. In 2013, Mr. Priamos was elected President of the City Attorney’s Department of the League of California Cities, the first Riverside City Attorney to hold such office.

Gary G. Geuss: 4/13/2015 – Present

Gary G. Geuss was appointed the Riverside City Attorney in March, 2015. Under general policy direction of the City Council, he is the City's chief legal advisor and the manager of the City Attorney's Office. He received his undergraduate degree in Political Science from California State University of Northridge and his Juris Doctorate for Southwestern University School of Law.

Gary started his legal career at Lynberg & Watkins practicing insurance and municipal defense work. He later moved to the Los Angeles City Attorney's office as a deputy city attorney as a prosecutor for five years before transitioning back to the defense of the City of Los Angeles. Gary was promoted to Civil Litigation Manager supervising the police litigation, general litigation and employment litigation sections. After four years, he was promoted to Branch Chief of the Civil Management Branch.

In 2013, Gary was asked to serve as Branch Chief in charge of the LA Proprietary departments, The Department of Water and Power, LA International Airport and the Port of LA.