

# VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

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## Seeking what's best

*When total resolution doesn't occur, neutral Lynn O. Taylor works for both sides to benefit.*

By Gina Kim  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

A former 1st grade teacher and retired judge, Lynn O. Taylor said lawyers in court taught her in the same way she taught young children. Now, she is using those experiences to build a record of settlements after 14 months as a neutral with JAMS.

Taylor joined JAMS in October 2019 and has won plaudits from many attorneys who say she never gives up on a case no matter how difficult or complex. Taylor is persistent, patient and personable, they say.

"I'd recommend her services to anyone. She's very capable as a mediator," said Linda M. Inscoe, partner at Latham & Watkins. "She's very easy to work with and does not have an ego that gets in the way. She never tries to put unfair pressure on the parties."

The retired judge is also unafraid to pull out brackets if she believes parties are close to a deal, which Inscoe said she found especially helpful for her dispute. Brackets are used to help parties build a zone of a possible resolution and get closer to an agreement.

"Once we had the bracket, we knew we could settle this, but until you get inside the same bracket, it's always kind of dicey. You never know if you're going to get there or not, but Judge

Taylor helped us through that," Inscoe said.

Taylor handles employment discrimination, sexual harassment, wage and hour issues, independent contractor disputes, insurance, torts, inverse condemnation, real estate, malpractice, personal injury, product defects, California Environmental Quality Act claims and property disputes. Mediation takes up about 40% of her caseload with the remaining 60% arbitrations.

The Arizona native said she believed as a young woman that her career options were limited.

"In those days a woman could be a teacher, a secretary or a nurse," Taylor recalled. "I thought maybe I could be a teacher because it sounded fun." Taylor graduated from the University of Arizona in 1964 and began teaching at 20. She then moved to San Francisco and taught at the Richmond Unified School District for six months before settling at a Catholic school to teach 1st grade. She soon realized being an elementary school teacher wasn't mentally stimulating enough for her, and searched for something more challenging. She enrolled in the night program at San Francisco Law School and continued teaching during the day.

"I'd study at the janitor's closet at lunch time. You just had to



Gary Wagner / Special to the Daily Journal

### Lynn O. Taylor

JAMS  
San Francisco

**Areas of specialty:**  
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study any time you can figure out when to do it," Taylor recalled. "You work all day, then have class from 6 to 9 p.m. I was young and had a ton of energy then."

Taylor graduated from law school in 1972 and passed the bar while seven months pregnant with her second child. She said she was determined to pass the exam the first time. Her husband, who was also a lawyer, gave his wife his notes and outlines to study five years' worth of previous State Bar questions.

Taylor worked in private practice in San Rafael from 1972 to 1982, then ran for a municipal court judgeship and won, defeating an incumbent judge and the city attorney. She was the first woman elected to the bench in Marin County. In 1990 she was elected without opposition to the superior court, where she served until

her retirement in 2004. She served three times as presiding judge.

She joined the Judicial Council's Assigned Judges Program and became a roving judge until 2019, when she retired. That work took her to several

counties. The last eight years were spent hearing cases in San Francisco, which never had enough judges, Taylor said.

“It was all so much fun, but I decided it was time for another change,” Taylor said. “That’s when I went with JAMS.”

Taylor said she isn’t deterred by cases that cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of either party.

“Sometimes you have a case where there won’t be a total resolution but maybe some remediation that can benefit both parties, and that’s what we work for,” Taylor said. “While it’s not perfect, we try to see what the best solution is where both parties can benefit.”

For matters that do not settle Taylor makes follow-up calls.

“Parties can get there if you give them time. They’ll end up telling you how to get it settled. It’s not me settling the case, by then, it’s the parties that settle,” she said.

Scott A. Lewis, partner at Perry Johnson Anderson Miller & Moskowitz LLP, recently handled a sexual harassment in the workplace dispute on behalf of a plaintiff, which went to mediation before Taylor. What made the neutral so special was her upbeat personality “and a fun laugh that takes away from the grind of emotional mediations,” he said.

“Especially in a case like this, where there is a great deal of emotion involved, Judge Taylor has such a warm persona, which we all enjoyed.”

“I’ve been doing this for years. Defendants don’t want to pay, but Judge Taylor’s approach to this dynamic was very respectful,” Lewis said. “She brings parties together on really divergent, polar opposite ideas of what a case is about, and brings them to a consensus of settlement. She’s fair, cordial and warm.”

Gregory S. Walston, founder of Walston Law Inc. in San Francisco, said he knew Taylor as a judge, and enlisted her services for a contentious business dispute.

“There were very strong feelings on both sides, and it was also a type of thing where there were also non-monetary issues, and required lots of creativity,” Walston said. “That’s why I came to Judge Taylor.”

Walston said he keeps a very short list of neutrals to use anytime he’s in a bind, no more than five to 10 make his list. Taylor is always on that short list.

“Put her on your list. That’s what I’d advise to lawyers,” Walston said.

Here are some attorneys who have used Taylor’s services: Therese Y. Cannata, Cannata, O’Toole, Fickes & Olson LLP; Scott Lewis, Perry, Johnson, Anderson, Miller & Moskowitz LLP; Linda Inscoe, Latham & Wakins LLP; Gregory Walston, Walston Law Inc.; Bryan Bjorge, Mokri, Vanis & Jones, LLP; Sarah N. Leger, Ragghianti Freitas LLP

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