



PUBLIC LAW SECTION

THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

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State Bar Honors Special Counsel to Governor Brown Sylvia Torres-Guillén as 2016 Ronald M. George Public Lawyer of the Year

SAN FRANCISCO –Sylvia Torres-Guillén, Special Counsel to the Office of the Governor, has been named the 2016 Ronald M. George Public Lawyer of the Year by the California State Bar’s Public Law Section.

Torres-Guillén will be honored at a reception in September during the State Bar’s Annual Meeting in San Diego. The Public Lawyer of the Year Award recognizes Torres-Guillén as an exceptional attorney who has dedicated a significant portion of her career to public service.

“Sylvia Torres-Guillén is an exemplary public lawyer and wholly deserving of this award,” said Elizabeth G. Pianca, chair of the Public Law Section. “Throughout her career, Ms. Torres-Guillén has served the public, both as a lawyer and educator, mentoring young lawyers for careers in public service. From her early days of coaching criminal defense attorneys in trial techniques to her dedication to the protection of farm worker rights, Ms. Torres-Guillén embodies the mission of the Public Law section of the State Bar. The Executive Committee is proud to honor her with the 2016 Public Lawyer of the Year Award.”

After clerking in the Berkeley Community Law Center and the Contra Costa County Public Defender’s Office, Ms. Torres-Guillén began her legal career in private practice at Morrison & Foerster before becoming a deputy federal public defender at the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Central District of California. She was appointed in 2011 as the General Counsel to the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) before her appointment as special counsel to Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in 2015.

In a letter of support for her nomination as the Public Lawyer of the Year, former California Supreme Court Associate Justice Carlos R. Moreno wrote “Back when I was a district court judge, I had the pleasure of having Ms. Torres- Guillén appear before me on numerous occasions when she served as a deputy federal public defender in the Central District of California. Her representation of her clients always demonstrated the utmost competence and professionalism, courtesy to the court and opposing counsel, and an abiding conviction to the fair and just treatment of her clients.”

As General Counsel to the ALRB, her dedication and hard work increased the agency’s responsiveness to stakeholders and ensured agency accountability to the farm worker community.

Committed to diversity in the legal profession, Ms. Torres-Guillén was a member of the State Bar of Californian Council on Access and Fairness from 2010 to 2013, served as co-chair of the Hispanic National Bar Association’s Latina Commission from 2010 to 2011 while also serving as co-president of the Latina Lawyers Bar Association and vice-president of the Mexican American Bar Foundation from 2009 to 2011.

Ms. Torres-Guillén received her undergraduate degree from Harvard University and her Juris Doctor from University of California, Berkeley.

The California State Bar's Public Law Section ensures that the laws relating to the function and operation of public agencies are clear, effective and serve the public interest; advances public service through public law practice; and enhances the effectiveness of public law practitioners. The section focuses on administrative law, municipal law, open meeting laws, political law, education law, state and federal legislation, public employment, government contracts, tort liability and regulations, land use/environment issues, and public lawyer ethics. The section provides educational programs, seminars and resource materials, and publishes the quarterly Public Law Journal.