

JAMS Brings On Retired San Bernardino County Judge

By James Mills

Law360 (November 22, 2024, 9:32 AM EST) -- The alternative dispute resolution service JAMS has expanded its mediation team, announcing this week it has added a former San Bernardino County Superior Court judge as a neutral.

Elia V. Pirozzi, who retired from the bench on Oct. 11, has joined JAMS as a mediator, arbitrator, special master and referee. He served 14 years as a judge with the San Bernardino County Superior Court and two years after that as an assigned judge for unlimited civil and felony trial courts.

Pirozzi will be based in the JAMS resolution center in Riverside, California, but will also be available for online sessions.



Judge Elia V. Pirozzi

In a Thursday afternoon interview, Pirozzi told Law360 that mediation was what he enjoyed most about being a judge.

"The best part of my position as a judge was always settling cases, whether it was civil or criminal, and resolving discovery disputes informally, as well as trial work," Pirozzi said. "I thought the most natural transition for me, if I was going to continue in the legal field — my whole adult life had been in the law, so I didn't want to end that — was arbitration and mediation."

He met with several alternative dispute resolution firms and decided on JAMS because of the strong panel of neutrals and the excellent support staff.

"I wanted the transition to be as smooth as possible and the research that I had done showed JAMS was primarily focused on the kind of support I wanted to be getting from a marketing standpoint and from a legal analysis standpoint," Pirozzi said. "They offer so many resources that you can use to enhance your career as a neutral. I felt that background for an ADR firm would be critical for me and JAMS just hit the mark on every single one of them."

He expects to handle a wide range of cases, but reported he has a strong background in real estate.

"When I was a lawyer, I was primarily a business lawyer and real estate lawyer," he said. "I've had a real estate license since I was 18 years old. There's probably very little in the real estate field that I haven't seen in my career as a lawyer and certainly as a judge."

He also had experience with personal injury, medical malpractice, professional liability, commercial law, environmental law, eminent domain, land use, employment, finance and more.

JAMS was founded in 1979 as Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services. It now has 29 locations and a roster of about 450 mediators. JAMS CEO and President Kimberly Taylor is glad to have Pirozzi join.

"As a jurist, Judge Pirozzi stands out for his commitment to treating parties with fairness and for his ability to navigate even the most complex of cases," Taylor said in a statement. "Through his work on the bench, as an educator and in private practice, he has developed a deep understanding of many areas of the law and the strong interpersonal skills that will make him a fantastic addition to our panel."

Pirozzi was born in New Jersey, but came to Southern California at age 11 when his family moved to Simi Valley. He earned his law degree in 1982 from Southwestern University School of Law in Los Angeles, then 15 years later went on to get his master of laws in environmental, comparative and international law in 1997 at the University of San Diego School of Law.

He worked for a real estate firm for several years after law school then joined the California bar in 1989 and worked as an associate in the Law Offices of Robert E. Weiss. At the same time, he became president and CEO of WestProp Real Estate Corporation, a company he co-founded with his wife. That company became an affiliate of Coldwell Banker in 2005.

In 1991, he opened his own firm, the Law Offices of Elia V. Pirozzi, handling civil cases. Then in 2007, he was appointed to the San Bernardino County Superior Court by then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Thomas Glasser.

Pirozzi retired from the bench on April 21, 2021, to deal with some medical issues. Once he recovered, the presiding judge in San Bernardino County invited him to come back as an assigned judge to help with the backlog of trials that had built up during the COVID-19 pandemic. He initially agreed to come back for a year, but ended up staying two years, finally stepping down in October 2024 and officially joining JAMS a few days later.

He enjoyed being a judge and expects to enjoy being a neutral because he likes the concept of public service.

"I always enjoyed the law and I thought that being a judge would expose me to many more areas of law than I had been practicing in. Intellectually, I thought it would be the most interesting career choice to make from being a lawyer," Pirozzi said. "That same reason carried me into ADR. It's the broad categories of case that will come your way, whether it's as an arbitrator or a mediator. You're going to see so many different and complicated, complex legal issues that are going to need to be addressed. I thought it would be the best challenge for me at this stage of my life."

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.