

Contra Costa's first African-American, woman DA sworn in



Diana Becton hugs Contra Costa County Supervisor Federal Glover moments before being sworn in as the new District Attorney for Contra Costa County in Martinez, Calif. on Monday, Sept. 18, 2017. (Jose Carlos Fajardo/Bay Area News Group)

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MARTINEZ — In a brief but energetic ceremony, Diana Becton was sworn in Monday as the first African-American and first woman to serve as Contra Costa County's district attorney.

Becton, a retired judge, kept her remarks brief but received a standing ovation from a crowd that included a mix of deputy district attorneys, defense lawyers, police officers and members of the community.

"I appreciate all the support in this room," Becton said. "I'm going to be doing my best to work collaboratively with everyone in this great office, and also to serve the people of Contra Costa County. That is my pledge to you."

"I'm asking for everyone's support as we go forward, to protect our community and to make it safe for everyone," she continued.

Becton was selected among a dozen applicants to replace Mark Peterson, who resigned in June. Peterson admitted in December to illegally spending \$66,000 in campaign cash,

was charged with 13 felonies, and resigned hours before pleading no contest to perjury and receiving probation. She will serve the remainder of Peterson's term, which ends in January 2019.

Becton became a judge in 1995, and before that worked in the city of Richmond's finance department and as an attorney. During her 22-year tenure on the bench, she served as presiding judge of Contra Costa and in 2016 was elected president of the National Association of Women Judges. Tuesday will mark her first full day as a prosecutor.

Becton has voiced support for progressive causes like bail reform, restorative justice and programs like Colin Kaepernick's Know Your Rights Campaign, which seeks to educate youths about interacting with law enforcement.

Supervisors supported her by a margin of 3-2 over senior district attorney Paul Graves, who plans to run for DA next year and was supported by law enforcement groups and the prosecutors union. During the selection process, Becton came under criticism after she admitted to using unattributed written material throughout her written application to be DA, which she later called a mistake.

Supervisor Federal Glover, who supported Becton, swore her in Monday. He called the occasion "historic" and said Becton was eager to "hit the ground running." A more festive ceremony commemorating her appointment will take place in the near future, Glover said.

"It's an historic day in Contra Costa. It breaks two barriers," Supervisor John Gioia said. "And she was the best candidate to protect public safety and administer justice."