

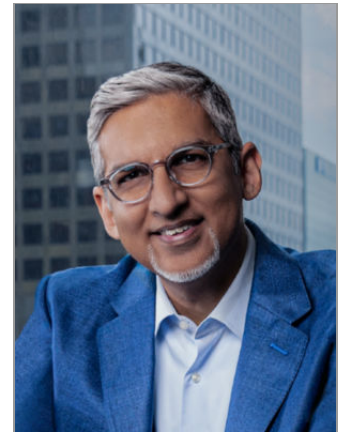
Signature Resolution Gains Retired Calif. Appellate Justice

By **Emily Johnson**

Law360 (July 24, 2023, 4:30 PM EDT) -- Alternative dispute resolution services provider Signature Resolution on Monday said it has brought on a retired California appellate justice, who was the first Muslim to serve as a Court of Appeal justice in the U.S., strengthening its services in Los Angeles, Century City, San Diego and virtually.

Retired Justice Halim Dhanidina has joined the firm as a neutral party, serving as a mediator, arbitrator and appellate consultant, the firm announced. Dhanidina has more than 25 years of legal experience since starting his career as a deputy district attorney for Los Angeles County.

Dhanidina told Law360 Pulse on Monday that even when he retired from the bench, Signature Resolution "was on [his] radar," because he considered it to be the "premier provider" in Los Angeles and California.



Justice Halim Dhanidina

He said moving from private practice to Signature Resolution felt right at this moment.

"The main reason why I decided this was a good time had a lot to do with what I had already accomplished in my career and what I felt like I had yet accomplished," Dhanidina said. "I had an extensive career as trial attorney and a trial judge and got pretty significant experience on the Court of Appeals, as well and I was looking for a challenge. After spending a couple of years in private practice, I decided this was the time and I have always been really motivated by what I consider to be the crucial service that mediators play in our system."

Dhanidina said alternative dispute resolution services are increasingly popular and necessary as the costs of litigation increase.

"I think there's an acknowledgment that most civil cases do in fact settle at some point and most do not settle as early as they could," he said. "So I think mediators play an important role in helping two sides that have been at odds and perhaps in a situation where bad blood has been built up – help them both to see a way out from the collision course that litigation represents for a lot of people."

Dhanidina said he thinks his judicial experience helps him be neutral and to be able to weigh "the strengths and weaknesses of both sides in a way that I think allow you to present potential resolutions that can save both sides a lot of costs, time and heartache."

Dhanidina said ADR services are increasingly crucial as public confidence has declined in the government, including the judicial system, where some feel that an adverse result is due to a bias

on the part of the decision-makers.

A mediator's duties differ from those of a judge or jury, and settling before trial benefits all sides, he said.

"What mediators do is they try to help the parties come to a decision outside of the traditional judicial system so judges and juries are not needed," Dhanidina said. "Instead the parties craft a settlement on their own. Sometimes that's easier said than done. If you have two parties that have been head-on in litigation, often there's this feeling that's like 'if the other side wants it, it must be bad for me,' and I think that's where mediators can step in and provide that neutral perspective to help people see the value in a potential resolution to their dispute in a way that they can trust it and not feel like 'Well, if I agree to this I'm just giving in to the other side.'"

After serving as a Los Angeles County superior court judge for nearly six years, he was the first South Asian to serve as an appellate justice in California, a role he served in for nearly three years. He was also the first Muslim to serve as a superior court judge in California.

As an appellate justice, he reviewed nearly 1,000 appeals that dealt with areas of the law such as family, employment, business litigation and probate, according to the firm.

After retiring from the California Court of Appeal's Second District in Los Angeles at the end of March 2021, Dhanidina **joined** business litigation and intellectual property boutique Umberg Zipser LLP, where he was a partner in the firm's complex litigation practice with a focus on trials and appeals.

Dhanidina most recently served as a partner for Werksman Jackson & Quinn LLP, having **joined** the criminal defense boutique headquartered in downtown Los Angeles as a partner in April 2022.

According to his LinkedIn profile, he also serves as an independent director for Fidelity National Financial. He has also served as a lecturer at the UCLA School and the University of California, Irvine School of Law. In addition, he was an adjunct professor at Chapman University's Dale E. Fowler School of Law.

Dario Higuchi, Signature Resolution's founding partner and managing member, said in a statement that Dhanidina brings a "multifaceted experience" to the company.

"Through his tenure with the Second District Court of Appeal and Los Angeles County Superior Court, he has built a unique career overseeing various elements of the trial process," Higuchi said. "Additionally, he has formed an engaged and diplomatic mediation style, making him a valuable addition to our panel."

Dhanidina is the latest retired judge to join the company that was established in 2017 in Los Angeles.

The company **announced** last August that Amy D. Hogue, a retired Los Angeles County Superior Court judge, **joined** as a mediator and arbitrator. She brought more than 20 years of judicial service to the company.

--Additional reporting by James Mills and Rachel Rippetoe. Editing by Vaqas Asghar.

Update: This story has been updated with comments from Dhanidina.