

GAIL PELLERIN

Gail Pellerin served as the chief elections official in Santa Cruz County from 1993 until her retirement in December 2020. As County Clerk, Gail managed all elections conducted in the county and served as the Commissioner of Civil Marriage. Gail has 35 years of experience in public service – over seven years working for the State Legislature in Sacramento, including for an Assembly office representing Morgan Hill, and 27 years working for the people of Santa Cruz County. In June 2018, Gail was elected to her 4th term as County Clerk.

Gail served as President of the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials from 2010 to 2012 and served as co-chair of the Secretary of State’s Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee. She is a graduate of the California Professional Election Administrator Credential program and has taught credential courses on Voters with Specific Needs and Budgets. She is also a graduate of Leadership Santa Cruz County.



In her capacity as County Clerk, Gail has always been a strong advocate for same-sex marriages and received the Hammer of Justice Award from the Santa Cruz County Chapter of the ACLU in August 2009 as well as proclamations from the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and City of Santa Cruz honoring her service to the community including her work on marriage equality issues. In 2010, she received the Kudos Award from the Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities, and in 2020, Gail received the Lifetime (Legacy) Achievement Award from the Santa Cruz County Chamber of Commerce. In 2021, Assemblymember Mark Stone honored Gail as a Woman of the Year by the California Legislative Women’s Caucus, recognizing women who are making an extraordinary difference in their communities. This year, Gail was honored for her work as a 2022 Democracy Hero by California Common Cause who has been fighting for voting rights, redistricting reform, government transparency, and to ensure that democracy includes everyone for over 50 years.

As Santa Cruz County Clerk, Gail worked closely with the Santa Clara County elections office, coordinating vote centers, registering new voters at citizenship ceremonies, participating in conferences on election administration, and in combined efforts for remote voters located at the Summit between the two counties. Both departments use the same voting system, so they also function as a back-up to one another if there is ever an outage or any other issue preventing the ability to administer an election.

Major accomplishments while serving as County Clerk include: authoring several election guidebooks to assist voters in navigating through various election procedures including initiatives, recalls, and referendums; implementing innovative voter outreach programs targeting high school students, college students, people living in residential care facilities, voters with disabilities, voters who speak a language other than English, new citizen voters, new residents, and incarcerated voters; mitigating the physical access to polling places so they are accessible to persons with disabilities; obtaining a VoteMobile to

provide mobile voting services to voters throughout the county, especially those displaced by the CZU fires in 2020; converting the county's voting model from a polling place system to a 4-day vote center system authorized during the pandemic where any voter could vote at any location; establishing Passport Saturdays to provide additional convenient hours for people to apply for a passport; and offering office hours for clerk and election services in Watsonville to allow customers to obtain services without having to drive to the government center.

When the global pandemic hit, instead of closing her office, Gail worked quickly to create a safe environment for customers to continue to get essential services from her office such as obtaining a marriage license or getting married. Gail's staff worked remotely, and she and one other staff person managed the onsite, in-person marriage functions so people could continue with their plans to get married. Gail insisted, "You cannot quarantine love."

Gail always believed she had the best job in the county managing the office of love and voting. But, after more than 27 years, it was time to make a change. Since retirement, Gail has joined the board of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and is involved with Girls Inc. and Women's Educational Success at Cabrillo College. She is currently involved in the process of creating the Cabrillo College Local Government Fellows program, to encourage first generation students to pursue an education that can lead to a career in local government and to provide scholarships and paid internships and mentorships. She is also involved with Emily's List, Breaking the Glass Ballot and WILDR (Women in Leadership for Diverse Representation), organizations dedicated to increasing the number of elected and appointed women in local, regional and state offices. Gail cannot shake the election bug, so she became involved with the California Democratic Party's Voter Protection Committee and Civitas Public Affairs to advocate for the Election Infrastructure Initiative to provide for long-term, sustainable federal funding for local elections offices over the next 10 years.

Gail has been an outspoken advocate for suicide prevention awareness and mental health resources after her husband, Tom, died by suicide on November 19, 2018. Tom was a Partner/Corporate Attorney in Santa Clara County at the Pillsbury Law Firm. Prior to that he practiced for more than a decade in San Jose at other firms. He was also a member of the Santa Clara County Bar Association, past Chairperson of the Tax Section of the Santa Clara County Bar Association and a member of the Executive Committee of the Business Law Section.

Gail has a BS in Journalism from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Prior to her experience in public service, Gail worked as a campaign assistant to political campaigns, newspaper reporter and photographer, and community college instructor.

In her spare time, Gail enjoys going to the beach with her labradoodle Darwin, spending time with her two adult children Jacob & Emily, connecting with family and friends, and traveling.

