

# President's Column

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Greetings:

As was expected, 1998 has proven to be a truly exciting year for the American Judges Association. We've taken our first steps to expand our membership into Mexico. This expansion will be informative for many of us who are not familiar with the Mexican judiciary, and may be enlightening for our present members who are familiar with the Mexican judiciary. Either way, the opportunity to meet and greet, exchange information and ideas, and make friends will be fascinating for us all.

Our expansion has also included many opportunities to attend various judicial gatherings where major organization leaders met for the first time and discussed issues that they shared in common, as well as to discuss projects that may be shared. The National Center for State Courts hosted one such meeting in June in Washington, D.C. Twenty or more organizations were present. Surprisingly, many present were concerned about the same issues. Hopefully, this gathering will provide the basics necessary for eventually arriving at some positive conclusions.

While public trust and confidence continue to dominate most judicial concerns, I hope that, as members of the American Judges Association, we remain concerned about security in the courtroom. I remain committed to the idea

that our courtrooms must be safe places for all who visit them. Our efforts thus far have been met with positive support. The Ohio Supreme Court has already conducted a statewide survey that will determine what courts need security, and how it should be implemented. To further accomplish our goal of security in every courtroom, at our mid-year meeting in Portland, Oregon, our governors committed to contact their legislators, governors and chief justices to seek their aid and support for security. Thankfully, we have not received one negative response. It will be a great day for the judiciary when we accomplish our goal.

Our annual conference will be held in Orlando in September. This will surely be one of the best conferences yet. The seminars will be exciting and informative, and the entertainment will be unsurpassable for us and our families. I hope to see you all, and look forward to my final months as your president.

If you are in Orlando as a first-time attendee, please get involved in our organization. If you're a regular attendee, we need your input, no matter what. Please say hello. We need your involvement!

*Shirley Strickland Saffold*