

AJA President's Update

Dear colleagues, I know there is nothing you all love more at this time of year than reading those holiday letters we all seem to get along with traditional cards. (But how to post letters on our home mantel and my office credenza, as I do with cards, to show off all the people who spent postage to greet me?) So here is my addition to your holiday mail, the second edition in my newsletter aimed at proving I actually do engage in some activities as your AJA President.

I have an election update about our excellent Cleveland fall conference, ably organized by Judges Michael Cicconetti, Eugene Lucci and Gayle Williams-Byers. It is not clear how Judge Williams-Byers did so much to help make that conference a success while running a hotly contested defense of her judicial seat, but she did, and in November she retained her South Euclid Municipal Court judgeship in a landslide with nearly 60% of the vote. Congratulations! Sympathetic condolences, however, to Judge Mary Kay Bozza, who was edged out of her judicial seat in a close election after 18 years of judicial service.

You may remember from my last newsletter that in Cleveland, our former AJA Presidents met and reached consensus, which they shared with me, about the need to make sure that AJA is delivering value and service to our members who cannot always get to conference. Many of you signed up for AJA committees, and have received my emails appointing you to your committees, as well as asking each committee to focus this year on one or two goals that will serve our many members we do not always see at conference. Committee meetings have already gotten underway. I want to remind you that if you want to join a committee now, it isn't too late to email me or Shelley to jump in!

I also want to remind all of you that AJA has now formed a wonderful alliance with President Benes Aldana of the National Judicial College. As you may recall, NJC is now providing 10 \$500 scholarships to AJA members, first come first served, to attend NJC courses. Plus, this coming year NJC will be presenting on our signature topic, Procedural Fairness, in Miami in January 2018 and in Anchorage in September 2018, and is offering for each that an AJA member attend as an observer, tuition free. Let us know if you are interested in taking advantage of these opportunities.

I have also been chatting with the current Presidents of NACM (National Association for Court Management), COSCA (Conference of State Court Administrators) and NASJE (National Association of State Judicial Educators), all long standing partners of AJA, about potential for future closer collaboration. We will see what develops during the coming year, but I will tell you all three organizations seem very receptive to making their ties with us even closer. I am confident NASJE will be even more inclined that way after Past President Brian McKenzie attends their upcoming conference on AJA's behalf in December in Charleston.

I was privileged to represent AJA myself at the Rehnquist Awards event on November 16 in Washington, D.C. This glittering affair is the National Center for State Courts' centerpiece annual event, and each attendee seems more distinguished than the last. Invitees include NCSC's board, Presidents of national court organizations, Justices, state court administrators, and more. I was overjoyed to see our own Judge Elizabeth Hines. She is a longtime NCSC board member, and her board service keeps being extended. Somehow she found time to also introduce me to everyone we saw. The attendees for this event are housed at the gorgeous, historic Willard Hotel, which is barely two blocks from the White House. My run the morning after I arrived was amazing, as I headed down the National Mall, then from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial. I took a breather to read the Gettysburg address and Second Inaugural Address, then ran past the White House to the hotel. And then later at the

elevator inside the hotel I found myself surrounded by Secret Service agents at the elevator area: apparently Vice President Pence was there, meeting with someone in the “Theodore Roosevelt” suite. The hotel boasts a history that dates back before the Civil War, a gorgeous interior, and a bar that serves the best Mint Julep I’ve ever tasted.

On the evening of the dinner, attendees are bussed to the United States Supreme Court, where a reception was held in the downstairs hall. A huge statue of Justice Marshall looms over the hall, and there are portraits of past justices lining it. One highlight of the evening for me was posing at the Marshall statute with Callie Dietz, current State Court Administrator for my own Washington state, and current President of COSCA (Council of State Court Administrators), as well as Mary McQueen, the former Washington State Court Administrator and current President of NCSC. We wanted to capture this moment in history when women from Washington began taking over the world.

The dinner was held in the large hall just inside the Court’s famous courtroom, and all attendees were able to peek into that chamber. None other than Chief Justice John Roberts hosted. The Rehnquist Award winner for 2017 was the Honorable Kim Berkely Clark of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. Her practice as a judge exemplifies AJA’s signature initiative, procedural fairness. And she gave a wonderful, rousing acceptance speech about how she developed that judicial perspective and about judicial independence generally. You can read it and her mini-bio in our very own Court Review, because after I introduced myself and did some relentless begging she kindly provided these items to us for your reading pleasure.

In late November, I represented AJA at the COSCA mid-year meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. The attendees were a distinguished group of state court administrators and their top staff. The venue was the charming and historic Bourbon New Orleans hotel in the French Quarter. It also has a bar that fronts Bourbon Street, and on the night I dropped in, had a

wonderful New Orleans jazz group too. I can attest their Sazerac is a standout. The hotel is so historic that a placard in the lobby tells guests about all the ghosts, most of whom seem to congregate in the area of my room on the 6th floor. I was somewhat disappointed not to witness any ghostly manifestations.

COSCA's midyear was highlighted by educational programs on developments in court technology and data management, on emerging technologies like neuroscience, block chaining, robotics, and virtual reality and their likely disruptive effects on courts, on the science of opiate addiction and recommended approaches to treat opiate addiction, on court based responses to opioid abuse, on the impact of declining caseloads, and on recommended techniques to handle judicial and court leadership challenges. Another COSCA conference highlight was our evening reception in the Louisiana Supreme Court. That historic building not only houses a remarkable rare book and legal document collection, but also is the seat of the Louisiana Court of Appeals 4th Circuit. I was delighted to see the appellate court's Chief Judge's picture on the wall, as of course I immediately recognized our own Past President James F. McKay. I will add that the Louisiana court administrator and his staff could not have been kinder or more welcoming.

Coming up next is the Executive Committee in Napa, California, a possible venue for a future spring AJA conference. We will try to get some work done while double checking that the restaurants and wineries are in good shape after this past year's fires.

Don't forget that our 2018 AJA midyear is April 19 to 21 in Memphis Tennessee at the Guest House at Graceland, which looks to be a marvelous venue. And we are talking Memphis here, a birthplace of rock 'n' roll and home of the blues, renowned for barbecue, and site of the National Civil Rights Museum, Beale Street, the Memphis Rock and Soul Museum, and Graceland. Judge Betty Moore and Justice Robert Torres have nailed down a fantastic education program, which will include presentations on judicial ethics, courthouse security, using reflective practice in judging, and a forensic look at the cold case of Elbert Williams. The

social events are going to be outstanding. Judge Moore has arranged a “Barbecue Feast” at a place called Alfred’s on Beale Street, and we are also planning outings to let you learn about the music and civil-rights history. Sign up soon!

The fall conference in Kuauai in September 2018 also looks to be top notch. The educational program is set, and every session appears excellent. Social planning is underway, and I hear rumors already of a possible luau, fun run, civics discussion at a local high school, and more. Thank you so much to Judge Catherine Carlson and Justice Torres for all their excellent planning. Could there be a more wonderful venue than this beautiful Hawaiian garden island?

We are continuing to plan closely with other organizations as we move forward. As you know, in September 2019, we will be at the beautiful downtown Drake Hotel in Chicago, and our conference will be in partnership with the Illinois state courts. Mark your calendars now! We are planning on a midyear in spring 2020 in gorgeous, historic Savannah, Georgia. Tentatively it appears we will be in Philadelphia, another historic and beautiful venue, in fall 2020. Now is the time to reach out to courts in these areas to plan together in advance. Now is also the time for you to think about your ability to connect us to court organizations and court oriented organizations in which you participate, for future collaboration to begin.

If you have not already done so, look again at our committee roster and find the AJA committee that matters to you, so that AJA can take your input and turn it into outstanding articles in *Court Review*, premier resources on our website, superb presentations at conference, and, in general, great guidance to the rest of us on being better judges. It is never too late to let Shelley Rockwell (srockwell@ncsc.org) know you want to join on. We need you and your knowledge, passion, and engagement.

I look forward to seeing your contributions, to hearing from you, and to seeing many of you at upcoming conferences. Meanwhile I promise to try to keep you updated. I wish you a wonderful holiday season and New Year.