



NEWS RELEASE

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Two Journalists Receive Awards for Legal Reporting from the American Judges Association

Denver, Colo. (Oct. 8, 2010) — The American Judges Association (AJA) presented its first American Gavel Award for Distinguished Reporting about the Judiciary to two journalists — one for national legal coverage and one for regional legal reporting — this week during AJA's annual conference in Denver. Ari Shapiro, NPR's White House and legal correspondent, received the award for national reporting, and Howard Pankratz of the Denver Post was the recipient for regional reporting.

AJA created the award in 2009 to recognize the highest standards of reporting about courts and the justice system. "This award recognizes legal journalism at its best, and highlights the importance of journalism in educating the public about the legal system and the fundamental principles and values upon which that system is based," said AJA President Judge James F. McKay III.

Ari Shapiro began covering the White House in 2010 after five years as NPR's justice correspondent. He began his NPR career as an intern to legal affairs correspondent Nina Totenberg in January 2001. Following that assignment, he worked as an editorial assistant and an assistant editor on Morning Edition. Before becoming NPR's justice correspondent, Shapiro worked as a regional reporter for NPR in Atlanta and Miami. Shapiro was the first NPR reporter to be promoted to correspondent before age 30.

Howard Pankratz received the regional award for his years of balanced and in-depth reporting on trials and the legal system in Colorado. Among the stories that Pankratz covered are the numerous legal issues that resulted from the Columbine massacre, the JonBenet Ramsey story, and the investigation of the Oklahoma City bombing and the trials of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. Pankratz joined the Denver Post in 1970, and from 1976 to 2007, he was the paper's legal affairs writer.

AJA is the "Voice of the Judiciary" and works to improve the effective and impartial administration of justice, to enhance the independence and status of the judiciary, to provide for continuing education of its members, and to promote the interchange of ideas of a judicial nature among judges, court organizations, and the public.

The National Center for State Courts, headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., provides executive secretariat services to AJA.

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