

BENCHMARK

AJA

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Greet the Springtime at AJAs Midyear Meeting

Come to the American Judges Association's midyear meeting next March and enjoy the hospitality of beautiful Hot Springs, Arkansas, and take advantage of the opportunity learn more about AJA.

AJA will hold its 2001 midyear meeting March 29-31 at the Austin Hotel and Convention Center. The Austin offers 200 rooms with a beautiful view of downtown Hot Springs and the Ouachita Mountains. Hotel amenities include 24-hour complimentary transportation services from the Hot Springs airport, indoor/outdoor heated pool and hot tub, full-service day spa, the Magnolia Grill Restaurant, and Rumors Lounge.

Although AJA's midyear meetings are working meetings for the executive committee and board of governors, all AJA members are welcome to attend. Registration fees are \$125.00 for judges and \$75.00 for spouses/guests. Room rates at the Austin Hotel are only \$90.00 single or double occupancy plus tax. The midyear meeting will include an optional Friday afternoon education session, topic to be determined.

Participants will enjoy a reception at the famous Hot Springs Baths on Thursday evening, sponsored by the Garland County Bar Association. On Friday night, they will enjoy a dinner at the beautiful Energy Properties on Lake Hamilton. The natural beauty of Hot Springs will encourage you to explore the area and enjoy hiking, golfing, boating (weather permitting), or just strolling around downtown. Shopping and restaurants are nearby as well. In addition, Oak Lawn Park Race Track will be reaching the end of its racing season, with some of the biggest horse races on its schedule. Trolley service will be provided to the track on Saturday afternoon.

The Austin Hotel is located approximately one hour from Little Rock. Although Hot Springs has an airport, you probably will find it more convenient to travel to Little Rock and rent a car. Directions to and other information about the Austin are available at their Web site, www.theaustinhotel.com. Check it out!

Judges interested in the midyear meeting should contact the Association Management Office at the National Center for State Courts, 300 Newport Avenue, P.O. Box 8798, Williamsburg, VA 23187-8798; (757) 259-1841, for further information. 

The Why of Best Practices in Judicial Administration

Gayle Nachtigal, Presiding Judge, Washington County, Oregon

Just what does "best practices" mean, and how does it apply to the judicial system? Why should a presiding judge in Washington County, Oregon, be concerned about "best practices"? These and many other questions went through my mind when Chief Justice E. Norman Veasey (Delaware) and Roger K. Warren, president of the National Center for State Courts, asked me to participate on a committee to develop an action plan for a Best Practices Institute. "Why" proved to be the easiest question to answer. The final answer to "what" is still to be determined. To fully appreciate the need for best practices, it is important to understand how the term came to be applied to the judicial system.

The first National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Judicial System was held in May of 1999 in Washington, D.C. The conference was sponsored, in cooperation with the National Center for State Courts, by the American Bar Association, Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), and League of Women Voters. Funding came from the American Bar Association, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Federal Judicial Center, League of Women Voters, and the State Justice Institute. Five hundred participants representing state chief justices, court managers, federal courts, lawyers, the media, and the public met to identify issues affecting the public's trust in the American judicial system. What was known before the conference was that the public's

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