

# Interview with AJA President Tam Schumann



New AJA president Tam Nomoto Schumann.

**B**enchmark recently caught up with incoming president Tam Schumann and had the chance to get her perspective on the year ahead. Here are some of her comments:

**Benchmark:** Congratulations on the success of the Hawaii conference and your appointment to president of the AJA. What do you see as the greatest challenges to the AJA in the coming year?

**Tam Schumann:** Thank you. I think our biggest challenge continues to be increasing our membership base through new membership and spreading the word as to what the AJA can offer. Our organization is unique in its ability to provide not only broad education to the judiciary but in fostering the exchange of communication between judges of various states and provinces. This allows for a dialogue for discussing problems and solutions to issues faced across North America. The networking element alone is a distinctive characteristic of the AJA. We have also established a new Legislation Committee, which is charged with keeping members apprised of national and local legislation affecting the judiciary.

**BM:** There is a strong Canadian presence in the AJA. How do you see their role in the AJA?

**TS:** The issues faced by the Canadian judiciary are not so different from those in the U.S. Still, they offer their own perspective on those issues and bring to the table problems and concerns which may benefit from the experiences of their southern neighbors.

**BM:** Speaking of southern neighbors, would you like to see more participation from Mexico?

**TS:** Of course. In the past we have had Mexican members and we should foster more involvement. Perhaps members of the border states can take a role in that invitation. For example, I believe Texas judges have some communications with Mexico and hopefully we can explore those contacts.

**BM:** What is the legacy you hope to leave from your tenure as president?

**TS:** I'm very excited about the white paper. The focus of the paper is on identifying stressors and, most importantly, suggesting means for reducing stress and increasing psychological wellness in the judiciary. On a pragmatic level, I'm hopeful that our judges can take the results to their courts' governing bodies who will implement some of the suggestions, such as the concept of sabbaticals for tenured judges. I also hope to energize the AJA, keeping us on the cutting edge of court technology, such as the move toward going paperless and efforts to make our courts more "green." I want to work toward improving means of communication between our members. As I mentioned, one strength of the AJA is our judicial network; I hope we can find new ways to exploit that strength through innovative means of communication.

**BM:** What do you see as the impediment to fulfilling your goals?

**TS:** With the current state of the economy, courts are more reluctant to support judicial education out of state. We see less and less reimbursement for travel expenses and even for registration fees for our conferences. This has a huge negative impact on membership and active participation. I'm optimistic that AJA will continue as a dynamic, interesting, and valuable resource such that judges will make membership a priority.

**BM:** One last question. On a personal level, what does this presidency mean to you?

**TS:** I'm extremely honored that I was elected to lead this wonderful organization. I volunteered to be a board

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## New Committee on Legislation & Elections

**A**JA president Tam Schumann has formed a new committee, the Legislation and Elections Committee. The purpose of this committee will be to collect information and serve as a resource regarding information on legislation or elections that might be of interest to AJA members. The Chair will be Marlene L. Allen-Hammarlund, senior counsel at Gresham Savage Nolan & Tilden, and former Judge Pro Tem in Riverside County, California. Since

this is a new committee, the chair remains open to suggestions about how it can be used to best assist AJA members. Articles will be presented in *Benchmark* periodically containing information of interest. Marlene would appreciate receiving information from members regarding legislation or elections that impact the judiciary. She can be contacted at Marlene.Allen@GreshamSavage.com, or (951) 823-8305. bm