

# The Bench Press

*The Federal Judges Association Newsletter*

August 2024

Dear Federal Judges Association (FJA) Members:

During the month of August, we approach the end of high temperatures, the fruits of the summer harvest, and the beginning of the term for schools and colleges. It is also an opportunity to exhale from heavy workloads before closing out the end of the year. So, take time to breathe!

Although there are no official holidays in August, there are many observances for kind gestures (denoted weeks for: exercising with your child, simplifying your life, smiling, nurturing friendships, preserving wellness, being kind to humankind; and denoted as a month for family fun and meals, eye exams and immunizations, and happiness). As we end the summer season, enjoy celebrating these themes of kindness, wellness, family, and friendship.

FJA President, J. Michelle Childs,  
United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit



## Member Spotlight

### **The FJA Spotlights the Honorable Camille L. Vélez-Rivé**

Meet Camille L. Vélez-Rivé of the District of Puerto Rico whom the FJA welcomed on March 27, 2023.

Camille was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She attended Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri (the institution where her father obtained his medical specialty, her brother and twin sister acquired their bachelor's degrees



and her daughter is a senior), majoring in French and graduating with honors. Returning to her island, she enrolled at the University of Puerto Rico Law School, and received her J.D. magna cum laude.

Upon passing the bar examination, Camille clerked for the Honorable Francisco L. Rebollo-López, retired associate Justice of the Puerto Rico Supreme Court, whom she describes as an important judicial mentor and an inspiring public servant.

Subsequently, she joined the litigation department of a large corporate firm. However, public service called, and she joined the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico. She began in its civil division and, after three years, was transferred to the criminal appellate division. In this latter capacity, she briefed and argued numerous criminal cases before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

In 2004 the judges of the District of Puerto Rico selected her for a magistrate judge position. She was reappointed twice and served over eighteen years, before being tapped for the district judgeship.

At the time of her Article III appointment, Camille was a highly seasoned and experienced judicial officer. The District of Puerto Rico historically has had one of the Nation's most congested criminal dockets, and it is not uncommon to see multi-defendant cases of over fifty, eighty or even over one hundred defendants. Thus, it was not uncommon for Camille during duty weeks to hold court in a college-size basketball arena for initial appearances and other proceedings when such huge takedowns occurred.

As a magistrate judge, Camille not only handled a busy civil and criminal pretrial calendar, but also had her significant docket of consent cases, at times ranging in the fifties. As such, she presided over twenty jury trials, ranging for example, from medical malpractice, torts, and employment discrimination to civil rights. Moreover, Camille was frequently referred cases for mediation, at times upon the parties' joint request because of her success rate. One such case involved an underground storage tank spill which had affected an entire community. A jury had found the defendant liable under the Clean Water Act and the district judge had scheduled the case for a damages trial. Following multiple mediation sessions, Camille successfully settled the case. More than one hundred families received compensation, and additionally a massive remediation plan was put into place.

The District of Puerto Rico's bench is comprised of seven district judgeships. In the past five years, five new jurists have rejuvenated its ranks. With Camille's wealth of experience, she certainly will greatly contribute towards the mission of imparting equal justice under the law.

## Committee Updates

Our committees are working for you! Here are some highlights of their accomplishments.

# International Rule of Law

*Chair: Cynthia M. Rufe*



## International Association of Judges

*promoting an independent judiciary worldwide*

When the FJA Delegation to the International Association of Judges Annual Meeting takes place in October, our delegates will be presenting the following reports as answers to specific Study Commissions in which all IAJ member countries participate. After presentation and discussion, each Commission creates a synthesis of the ideas, questions, and issues for its annual report to the Central Council in which all IAJ Delegates attend. The Presidents of each Study Commission present the report which is then filed with the Association and maintained on the IAJ website. FJA Delegates Senior District Judge Marilyn Huff (S.D. Cal.) and Senior Circuit Judge M. Margaret McKeown (9th Cir.), as the respective Presidents of the First and Fourth Study Commissions, will present to the assembly of 93 member countries and all delegates.

The following links can be opened to read the FJA submissions to the Study Commissions:

First Study Commission Report, **“The Effects of Artificial Intelligence on the Judiciary”**  
Submitted by Judge Marilyn Huff

Second Study Commission Report, **“Written Submissions, when do they turn from a Help to a Hindrance?”**  
Submitted by Senior District Judge Leo M. Gordon (Ct. Int'l Trade)

Third Study Commission Report, **“The rapid evolution of illicit drug manufacturing and the challenges this unstoppable process poses to successful prosecution”**  
Submitted by Senior District Judge Karen Schreier (D.S.D.)

Fourth Study Commission Report, **“Digital Revolution Impact on the Labor Market: Platform or Gig Economy and Artificial Intelligence”**  
Submitted by Judge M. Margaret McKeown

For additional questionnaire responses from other IAJ member countries' judiciaries, please check the IAJ website for reports, most of which are translated into English, French, and Spanish languages.

Circuit Judge J. Michelle Childs and Senior District Judge Cynthia M. Rufe will participate, respectively, in the First and Fourth Study Commissions as Advisors to the group.

Thank you for your interest!

[Visit IAJ Website](#)

**Membership**



The Membership Committee welcomes the following new members to the FJA:

Cristal C. Brisco (N.D. In.)  
Sarah A.L. Merriam (D. Conn.)

The following judges have been confirmed since our July newsletter. Please join us in welcoming them to the judiciary and encourage their membership in the FJA!

Stacey D. Neumann (D. Me.)\*  
Joseph F. Saporito (M.D. Pa.)\*  
Meredith A. Vacca (W.D.N.Y.)\*

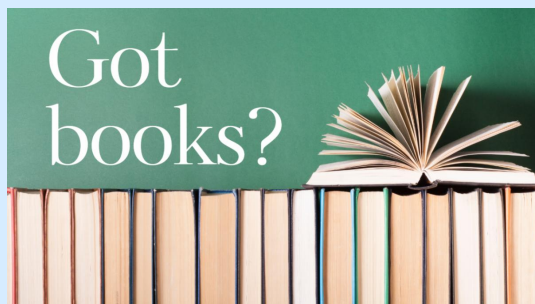
*\*Denotes judges who have not yet been sworn in according to the information we have been provided.*

## **Quadrennial**

**April 27-29, 2026**

*Co-Chairs: Cathy Bissoon and Sara Darrow*

### **Book Fair Survey**



The FJA Quadrennial Book Fair has become a much-anticipated part of the Quadrennial. We are excited to offer this again at the upcoming 2026 Quadrennial and need your help in identifying books and authors to highlight, specifically books authored by our very own members. Please take a quick moment to answer this survey so that we can begin compiling a comprehensive list of books and authors for the Quadrennial.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please feel free to reach out to FJA with any questions at [fja@federaljudgesassoc.org](mailto:fja@federaljudgesassoc.org) or (888) 329-1941.

Sincerely,

Judge Debra Brown (N.D. Miss.)  
Judge Marina Garcia Marmolejo (S.D. Tex.)  
Judge Robert Lasnik (W.D. Wa.)  
Judge Jack McConnell (D.R.I.)

[Complete Survey Here](#)

## **Senior and Retired Judges**

*Co-Chairs: Larry Piersol and James G. Carr*



The senior status judges staffing Subcommittee of the Judicial Resources Committee has not yet met since the full Committee meeting. Representatives from the FJA will attend the Subcommittee meeting when the Subcommittee next meets. We expect more specific recommendations from the Subcommittee, but we do not yet know what the specific recommendations will be. We will report important developments to the FJA as soon as practicable. As always, please communicate any specific concerns to our chairpersons via the email link provided.

## Announcements

In the July addition of the Bench Press, we shared with you that the District of New Jersey has established a food pantry named in honor of Judge Esther Salas's son, Daniel Anderl. On July 18, 2024, more than 100 people joined to celebrate the grand opening of Danny's Pantry and to honor Danny's generous spirit. The New Jersey federal family has made donations to stock its shelves and has established a link to allow everyone everywhere to donate food via Amazon. We share with you the link and some photos from the event.

[Read More](#)

[Amazon Wish List](#)



Judge Madeline Cox Arleo (D.N.J.)



Event Brochure



Chief Judge Renee Bumb (D.N.J.)



Judge Esther Salas (D.N.J.)

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## FJA Celebrates Unanimous Senate Passage of the JUDGES Act of 2024

On August 1, 2024, U.S. Senators Todd Young (R-Ind.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.) announced the unanimous Senate passage of their *Judicial Understaffing Delays Getting Emergencies Solved (JUDGES) Act of 2024*. The bill would address judicial emergencies and shortages across the country by adding 66 new federal district judges to the most overworked regions of the country. This landmark, bipartisan legislation will now head to the House of Representatives for consideration.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Senators Young and Coons, along with the bipartisan group of cosponsors: Senators James Lankford (R-Okla.), Alex Padilla (D-Calif.), Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii), Thom Tillis (R-N.C.), Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.), Jim Risch (R-Idaho), Mark Kelly (D-Ariz.), Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Rick Scott (R-Fla.), and Laphonza Butler (D-Calif.).

As the *JUDGES Act of 2024* moves to the House of Representatives, the FJA eagerly anticipates its passage and the positive impact it will have on our justice system. For more information, view the full text of the bill [here](#).

Members in the News



Member Judges around the country are actively involved in civics and service to the community. The FJA gives a shout out to the following members:

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### **U.S. District Court Judge Diane Humetewa Honored as the 2024 Chief Standing Bear Prize Recipient**

Judge Diane Humetewa, district judge for the District of Arizona, has been awarded the 2024 Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage by the Chief Standing Bear Prize for Courage Project. This award recognizes those Native Americans who exemplify courage in the spirit of Standing Bear in doing what is right, rather than what is expedient. Katie Brossy, board president of the Chief Standing Bear Project, said Judge Humetewa has shown great courage and is a shining example of what Native people can accomplish within the legal profession. Like Chief Standing Bear, Judge Humetewa has been a trailblazer within the legal system and her list of “firsts” is a testament to following in Standing Bear’s footsteps: a first-generation law school graduate, first Native American U.S. Attorney, and most recently, in 2014, the first Native American woman U.S. District Court Judge. She has also served as a voice for justice as a national speaker presenting about prosecuting crimes on tribal lands and protecting cultural resources. To read more about Judge Humetewa and The Chief Standing Bear Project, Inc., please click [here](#).

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### **1st Circuit Naturalization Ceremonies Impact the Next Generation of Engaged Citizens**

Chief Judge Landya McCafferty, chief judge of the District of New Hampshire, invites eighth graders to experience naturalization ceremonies at the courthouse in Concord, New Hampshire, almost every month, and she brings these ceremonies into high school auditoriums several times a year. Judge McCafferty believes that naturalization ceremonies are understood to be life-changing, even history-making, events for new citizens, and she believes that the impact on observers can also be profound. Judge McCafferty encourages federal judges to take naturalization ceremonies into schools and to invite state court judges and other public officials to join them. To read more about Judge McCafferty, please click [here](#).

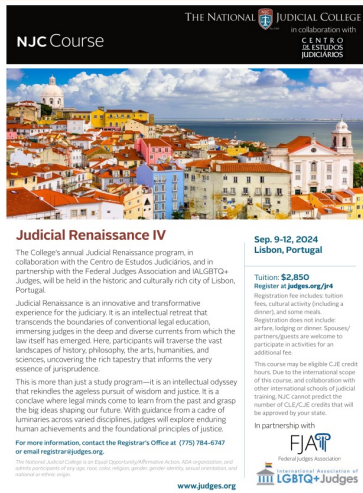
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### **11th Cir. Judge Richard W. Story to Receive the 2024 American Inns of Court Professionalism Award for the Eleventh Circuit**

Judge Richard W. Story, a senior district judge of the Northern District of Georgia, has been selected to receive the prestigious American Inns of Court Professionalism Award for the Eleventh Circuit. This award recognizes a lawyer or judge whose life and practice display

sterling character and unquestioned integrity, coupled with ongoing dedication to the highest standards of the legal profession and the rule of law. Judge Story has served as a district judge for the Northern District of Georgia since 1998. He assumed senior status in 2018. Judge Steven D. Grimberg of the North District of Georgia wrote of Judge Story, “Throughout his life and career on the state and federal bench, Judge Story has displayed impeccable character and integrity beyond reproach. Judge Story has led a life and career that exemplify what the American Inns of Court is intended to foster and develop within the beloved legal profession that we all share.” To read more about Judge Story, please click [here](#).

## Upcoming Events



### Judicial Renaissance, National Judicial Conference

The FJA has partnered with the National Judicial College to join them for a seminar and conference in Portugal.

During Judicial Renaissance, judges rediscover the foundations of justice as embodied within the scope of lasting human achievements.

WHEN: September 9-12, 2024

WHERE: Portuguese Center for Judicial Studies

Attendees can also enjoy several field trips during the conference, including trips to Setubul and to Quinta da Bacalhôa, where they will tour the Palace and Museum.

There is also a dinner cruise planned on the Tagus River. The Tagus River serves as an important source of water for agriculture providing irrigation to local farms. With its beautiful landscapes and abundant resources, it is no wonder that this important river has been so vital in shaping both Spanish and Portuguese history since ancient times!

[Learn More](#)

Greetings from the Federal Judicial Center! The **Appellate Judges Education Institute** will be held on **November 14-17, 2024**, at The Westin Boston Seaport District Boston, MA.

Reimbursement authorization has been approved for eligible appellate judges.

**Summit Agenda:** Check-in and registration for the summit begins at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, November 14, 2024. The formal summit begins at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, and concludes at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, November 17, 2024.





The Appellate Judges Education Institute Summit provides appellate judicial education and gathers federal and state appellate judges from across the country for practical, cutting-edge, educational programming. This is an educational opportunity you will not want to miss. Click the button below for additional information about the program.

**Accommodations:** The Appellate Judges Education Institute has secured rooms at The Westin Boston Seaport District 425 Summer Street Boston, MA 02210, which is the same location as the summit. For reservations: **The Westin Boston Seaport District** or contact the JW Marriott at (617) 532-4600 or 1-800-937-8461; please indicate that you are with the AJEI group. **Please reserve your room by Monday, October 24, 2024.**

**Reimbursement for Expenditures:** You may claim **Actual Daily Expenses of up to \$384** on November 13-15, 2024 (Lodging-\$289; M&IE-\$95), \$348 on November 16, 2024 (Lodging-\$289; M&IE-\$59) for lodging, meals and allowable incidental expenses (\$95 on the last day of travel). (Some meals are being provided.) If you prefer you may claim Actual Lodging of \$289 Plus the standard M&IE of \$79 on November 13-15, 2024, Actual Lodging of \$289 Plus M&IE of \$43 on November 16, 2024 (\$79 on the last day of travel). (Some meals are being provided.)

Please contact Maureen Kieffer at (202) 868-9741; [mkieffer@fjc.gov](mailto:mkieffer@fjc.gov) if you have any questions about the program. Contact Yolanda Gonzalez, Program Coordinator, at (202) 961-4262; [ygonzalez@fjc.gov](mailto:ygonzalez@fjc.gov) or Joy Lyngar at (775) 327-8263; [lyngar@judges.org](mailto:lyngar@judges.org), with any questions regarding hotel and travel. We anticipate a productive summit and look forward to seeing you in Boston, MA!

[Learn More](#)

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### August Edition | *The Bench Press*

Have a submission for the upcoming edition of The Bench Press? Please share it by **September 5, 2024**. We would love to share your special news with the membership. **Email us!**

[Email Us Your News](#)



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**J. Michelle Childs**  
President

**Mary Scriven**  
Communications Committee Chair

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