

# The Bench Press

*The Federal Judges Association Newsletter*

November 2024



Dear Federal Judges Association (FJA) Members:

For this month's newsletter, I wanted to take a moment to honor our veterans. Veterans Day has been a tradition of our nation that began with the signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918, marking the end of World War I. This day has evolved to recognize the service and sacrifices of all who have defended our country. Honoring our veterans goes beyond this special day. Honoring our veterans also goes beyond words and ceremonies. Several statutes have underscored our commitment to protect their rights under the Rule of Law. The G.I. Bill offers educational and training benefits to veterans and their families. The Veterans Claims Assistance Act establishes the duty of the Department of Veteran Affairs to assist veterans to obtain their benefits. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act protects veterans' ability to obtain employment after they return to civilian life. All of these laws provide a foundation for veterans' rights and the courts then are tasked with upholding the rights guaranteed under these laws. Let us



honor and celebrate those who have served, those who are currently serving, and their families who have supported them through their sacrifices.

FJA President, J. Michelle Childs

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### **FJA Hard at Work for You**

Your organization is fully engaged and hard at work for you! Thank you to the 325+ judges that added their name to the recent JUDGES Act letter. Click below to review the final letter.

FJA also solicited comments on budget issues affecting chambers' staff and sent a letter to the Judicial Resources Committee. Click below to review the final letter.

[JUDGES Act Letter](#)

[JRC Budget Issues Letter](#)

## Member Spotlight

### **For a change of pace, this month the FJA spotlights retired judge, Hon. John Gleeson**

After a young John Gleeson had wrapped up a clerkship with Judge Boyce Martin on the United States Courts of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, worked at Cravath, Swain & Moore for four years, and ultimately landed at the U.S. Attorney's office in the Eastern District of New York, he thought he had the perfect job. Arriving on the federal bench in the same courthouse in 1994, Judge Gleeson did not think there was a professional life worth living off the bench. Now, eight years since leaving the bench in 2016, private attorney John Gleeson is again convinced that he



has the best job in the profession.

Almost every federal judge has heard of John Gleeson. As an Assistant U.S. Attorney, Judge Gleeson served as Chief of the Criminal Division, Chief of Special Prosecutions, Chief of Appeals, and Chief of Organized Crime. He took down John Gotti, head of the Gambino family, and Victor Orena, head of the Colombo Families of La Cosa Nostra. The Attorney General recognized Judge Gleeson's work with the Distinguished Service Award.

In 1994, Judge Gleeson was nominated to the federal district court, serving in Brooklyn. He took the bench at the young age of forty-one to the seat vacated by the highly esteemed Judge Jack Weinstein. As a federal judge, Judge Gleeson presided over several MDLs, including antitrust class actions against Mastercard and Visa. His trial judge experience also included overseeing the prosecution of the "Wolf of Wall Street" and actively monitoring a deferred prosecution agreement with HSBC Bank. He was also an outspoken critic of mandatory sentences and the sentencing guidelines.

Judge Gleeson fully expected to follow his mentor Judge Weinstein's lead of spending fifty years on the federal bench. He loved every day as a judge, but twenty-two years on the bench is a long time. And he looked forward to making a change. He initially felt apprehension about the transition from the bench to private practice. Judge Gleeson felt, as he put it, "as nervous as a new trial lawyer." While he had presided over hundreds of trials during his time on the bench, that role is very different from standing in the well of the courtroom. Once Judge Gleeson made the switch to private practice, he landed at Debevoise & Plimpton, working in the Commercial Litigation and White Collar groups. Judge Gleeson maintains an active trial practice and commented that one of the most rewarding aspects was getting to try a case with a former law clerk who is now a law partner. He said of that experience that there are "few things that replicate the judge/law clerk relationship, but trying a case comes close!"

In addition to billing hours, Judge Gleeson is the proud founder of The Holloway Project, a pro bono project involving sentencing reductions. Starting in 2020 with its first win, The Holloway Project has obtained over sixty reductions (more than one per month) under the compassionate release statute with the average reduction between thirty-nine and forty years. Over one hundred present and former Debevoise lawyers have worked on the cases, most of which involved stacked 18 U.S.C. § 924(c) sentences. Judge Gleeson has said that "thanks to the First Step Act, we now have a meaningful 'second look' in the federal system."

Judge Gleeson expanded on this important advocacy when, in 2022, he was confirmed as a commissioner on the United States Sentencing Commission. In that role, he enjoys the intellectual work that goes into sentencing reform at the wholesale level, providing guidance for over 60,000 sentencing hearings each year. Judge Gleeson has said, "The work is rewarding, and I love my colleagues." Judge Carlton Reeves, chair of the United States Sentencing Commission, says, "like so many federal judges, I have long looked up to John Gleeson for his leadership from the bench on criminal justice reform. It is an honor to work alongside him at the Commission, where his deep compassion, vast wisdom, and unmatched courage are doing wonders to make federal sentencing fairer."

Judge Gleeson says he appreciates private practice and acknowledges that it took a little courage to make the jump. "Everyone treats you nice as a judge, but going back into private practice takes a little bit of a runway. There are lots of talented lawyers competing for the business." Judge Gleeson thinks it took him about five years to become fully engaged in the

practice. However, eight years in, John Gleeson feels just like he did as a new U.S. Attorney or a new district judge, and he cannot imagine doing anything different.

# Committee Updates

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

## Civics and Service

*Co-Chairs: Beth Bloom and Robin S. Rosenbaum*



The Civics & Service Committee continues its three major projects: the Naturalization Civics Challenge, the Clerkship Chats, and the Speech Bank. In this edition of *The Bench Press*, we focus on the Naturalization Civics Challenge.

As a reminder, in the Naturalization Civics Challenge, high-school students take the naturalization civics test. If they score at least 90%, we award them an “Excellent Citizen” certificate and invite them to attend a federal-court naturalization ceremony in their home judicial district before a federal judge.

We’ve now completed the first year of the Naturalization Civics Challenge and have embarked on the second. We think it’s been a great success!

Here’s what one teacher whose class participated in the Challenge and attended a naturalization ceremony in the Middle District of Georgia had to say:

*I took 17 of our students to a Naturalization Ceremony in Columbus, Ga, on September 5, 2024. We got to tour the judge’s chambers prior to the ceremony and Judge Clay Land honored our students and included them in the ceremony introduction. It was a wonderful experience overall! My students were very appreciative of the opportunity and had several really great conversations about the process.*

*This is something I am so happy to have accessible to my school! I hope to continue to participate in the program with more students as the school year continues.*

*Thank you for everything you do for this program!*

And here is a picture of Judge Beth Bloom of the Southern District of Florida, along with students and their teacher from MAST Academy in Miami, after the students attended a naturalization ceremony over which Judge Bloom presided in June 2024:



We thank all of you who have generously given your time to this project, and we look forward to your continuing support.

If you are aware of any teachers or students who are interested in participating, they can find information about the challenge at this link: <https://federaljudgesassoc.org/federal-judges-association-civics-challenge/>

## Membership

*Chair: Nannette Jolivette Brown*

The Membership Committee invites you to a reception for newly appointed judges during Phase II training on Wednesday, December 4, at the Phoenix Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. (520 North Capitol St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20001). The reception will follow the training at 6:00 P.M. If you are in or around Washington, D.C. and can attend, please RSVP by emailing [fja@federaljudgesassoc.org](mailto:fja@federaljudgesassoc.org).

The Membership Committee also invites all new members and non-members to join us on Thursday, December 12, at 4:00 P.M. E.T. by Zoom to learn more about your FJA membership benefits and ways to get involved. Click the button below to RSVP.

**Orientation RSVP**



Do you remember when you were a new judge? Were there things you wish you knew then that you know now? The Membership Committee is creating a *Top 10 Things I Wish I Knew* list for new judges. Your ideas would be very helpful in creating this list. Please submit ideas to: [fja@federaljudgesassoc.org](mailto:fja@federaljudgesassoc.org).

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

Frances Kay Behm (E.D. Mich.)  
Jerry Edwards, Jr. (W.D. La.)  
Karin J. Immergut (D. Or.)  
Laura M. Provinzino (D. Minn.)  
Kevin G. Ritz (6th Cir.)

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

Shanlyn A.S. Park (D. Haw.)

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## In Memoriam



The FJA mourns the loss of the following members:

**Alan N. Bloch**

U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania

**John F. Keenan**

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York

**John Corbett O'Meara**

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan

Click on a judge's name to learn more about his judicial legacy.

## Nominating

*Chair: Richard Clifton*



We are pleased to announce the members of the FJA 2024 Nominating Committee. This committee is responsible for nominating the Officers and five Executive Committee members to serve a two-year term which will begin on April 4, 2025, and end at the Board Meeting in or around April 2027.

Thank you to these members for your time and efforts on behalf of the FJA!

Richard Clifton, Chair (9th Cir.)  
Sarah Evans Barker (S.D. Ind.)  
Stephen Bough (W.D. Mo.)  
Debra Brown (N.D. Miss.)  
Robin S. Rosenbaum (11th Cir.)  
Patty Shwartz (3rd Cir.)  
Aleta Arthur Trauger (M.D. Tenn.)

The Nominating Committee will consider candidates to fill the positions of President-Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, and five Executive Committee members. As Karen Schreier becomes our next President in 2025, she will be looking for additional leaders to serve on the Executive Committee and as chairs of committees.

**If you are interested in serving the FJA in any leadership capacity, we encourage you to submit a Statement of Interest by November 22, 2024.** Similarly, if you wish to suggest another judge for consideration, please let us know. All submissions will be considered. They should be submitted to [fja@federaljudgesassoc.org](mailto:fja@federaljudgesassoc.org).

Sincerely,

J. Michelle Childs, FJA President

[Statement of Interest Form](#)

**DEADLINE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2024**

# Pay and Benefits

Co-Chairs: *Leo M. Gordon and Dan A. Polster*



Listen in as Judge Leo Gordon speaks with James De La Torre, President & CEO of FedAdvantage, about important updates and changes to your healthcare. Starting on November 20, 2024, Judge Leo Gordon, Judge John Gerrard, and Mr. De La Torre will host three live Q&A Sessions about your benefits.

First, listen to the pre-recorded webinar. Then, attend one of three Q&A sessions listed below.

Mr. De La Torre has provided a PowerPoint and a helpful document about how to choose the right health plan. If you'd like to request a consultation with Mr. De La Torre, complete the "Request Consultation" form linked below.

[Watch Benefits Webinar](#)

[Pay & Benefits PowerPoint](#)

[Choose the Right Plan](#)

[Request Consultation](#)

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## Live Q&A Sessions

**November 20, 12:30 PM ET / 9:30 AM PT**

**November 26, 12:30 PM ET / 9:30 AM PT**

**December 5, 12:30 PM ET / 9:30 AM PT**

### Zoom Meeting Information:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82289314697?pwd=Nu0tIxuWXc2MYk8wli0HoaujiAOauf.1>

Meeting ID: 822 8931 4697

Passcode: 950540

One tap mobile

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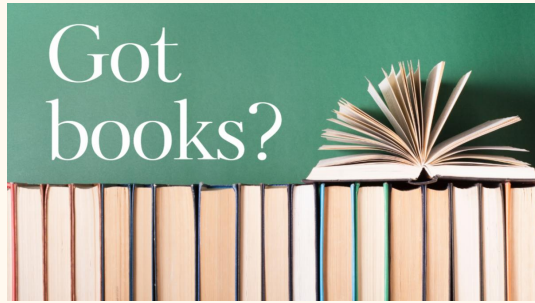
## Quadrennial

**April 27-29, 2026 in Washington, D.C.**

Co-Chairs: *Cathy Bissoon and Sara Darrow*



## Book Fair Survey



The FJA Quadrennial Book Fair has become a much-anticipated part of FJA's Quadrennial Conference, an event for federal judges and their guests held every four years in Washington, D.C. The committee is excited to host another Book Fair at the upcoming 2026 Quadrennial and needs 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 2026 Quadrennial Book Fair.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please feel free to reach out to the 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](#)

## 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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**Hon. M. Margaret McKeown, Life Fellow, Honored  
with the 2024 American Inns of Court**

## Lewis F. Powell Jr. Award



Hon. M. Margaret McKeown, Life Fellow, was announced as the 2024 American Inns of Court Lewis F. Powell Jr. Award recipient. Judge McKeown was presented with the award at the 2024 American Inns of Court Celebration of Excellence at the U.S. Supreme Court on October 26th.

The award is named for Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr., who served as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The award recognizes attorneys, judges, government officials, journalists, or others who have rendered exemplary service in the areas of professionalism, ethics, civility, and excellence.

Judge McKeown is a senior U.S. Circuit Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which is based in San Diego. She helped launch the San Diego Appellate American Inn of Court, served as the president of the Federal Judges Association, and is a U.S. delegate to the International Association of Judges.

[Read More](#)

## Announcements

### **Just the Beginning Announces 2025 Summer Judicial Internship Diversity Project**

JTB invites you to participate in the Summer Judicial Internship Diversity (“SJID”) Project by hosting a law student as a summer intern in your chambers in the summer of 2025. The Project is a partnership between the Judicial Conference’s Committee on Judicial Resources (“JRC”) and Just the Beginning—A Pipeline Organization (“JTB”), which is an organization that encourages underrepresented students to pursue career and leadership opportunities in the law. Click the button below to learn more.

[Learn More](#)

## Upcoming Events



## Reception for Newly Appointed Judges

The Membership Committee invites you to a reception for newly appointed judges during Phase II training on Wednesday, December 4, at the Phoenix Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. (520 North Capitol St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20001). The reception will follow the training at 6:00 P.M. If you are in or around Washington, D.C. and can attend, please RSVP by emailing [fja@federaljudgesassoc.org](mailto:fja@federaljudgesassoc.org).

## Open-Enrollment Season for Federal Employees

**REMINDER:** Open-enrollment season for federal employees to change elections for flex spending, dental, and vision insurance is taking place now until **December 9, 2024**.

## FJA 2025 Board Meeting

The 2025 Board Meeting has been scheduled for April 2 - 4, 2025 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We are excited to host the 2025 Board Meeting at The Green Federal Building with a reception and dinner to follow at the National Constitution Center. We look forward to providing additional details in the near future.

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### December Edition | *The Bench Press*

Have a submission for the upcoming edition of The Bench Press? Please share it by **December 12, 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

Federal Judges Association | [fja@federaljudgesassoc.org](mailto:fja@federaljudgesassoc.org)

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