



Federal Judges Association

# The Bench Press

*The Federal Judges Association Newsletter*

January 2025



Dear Federal Judges Association (FJA) Members:

Happy New Year!

As we begin the new year, I extend warm greetings to all FJA members. The turning of the year is more than an acknowledgement of a passage of time: each new year is a time to pause, reflect, and recommit to our role as the guardians of our nation's third branch of government. Let us approach this year with open hearts and minds, and with a renewed dedication to our role of serving the public and ensuring fair and impartial justice.



During these times of uncertainty, I offer you the following quote from a former chief justice of the Supreme Court:

“Judicial independence is one of the touchstones of our constitutional system of government. I like to think that the belief in the wisdom of an independent judiciary is not confined to judges alone, but is shared by other members of the legal profession and by the public at large.” -- Former Chief Justice William Rehnquist

This quote underscores our role in stabilizing society and reminds us that our judicial system stands at the center of our democracy.

We continue to uplift our colleagues and their families, as well as the first responders, that have struggled through the California wildfires. This tragic event is not just a national disaster but a devastating humanitarian challenge affecting our personal and legal communities. Many have lost lives, possessions, and faith in their ability to recover. Within this newsletter, we have listed opportunities to assist those in need and will continue to provide opportunities to do so.

Wishing you peace and prosperity in 2025!

J. Michelle Childs, President

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## HELPING OUR COLLEAGUES IN CALIFORNIA

Our thoughts continue to be with the federal judges and their families living in areas affected by the devastating wildfires in California. The safety and wellbeing of our judiciary is paramount to the functioning of our justice system. We are actively monitoring the situation and stand ready to provide necessary support and resources to ensure both their personal safety and the continuity of judicial operations.

We urge all judges in potentially affected areas to follow local evacuation orders and safety protocols. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts remains committed to supporting our judges during this challenging time and will assist with any needed relocation or continuity of operations measures.

We encourage those seeking information about courthouse operations or case scheduling to contact their respective court clerk's offices. Updates regarding any temporary relocations or operational changes will be communicated through official channels as the situation develops.

For those with urgent passport needs, please visit the team at the Los Angeles Disaster Recovery Center to help replace valid passports lost in the fires. They are accepting applications, taking photos, and waiving fees, so the entire process is free. If you or someone you know had a valid passport lost or damaged in the wildfires, they can visit 10850 West Pico Blvd. in Los Angeles daily from 9am to 8pm or can also renew by mail following the process at [travel.state.gov/disaster](https://travel.state.gov/disaster).

For those interested in assisting with the relief efforts, please click the button below for a list of resources identified by those in the affected area.

[California Resources](#)

Member Spotlight

## The FJA spotlights Judge Darrel James Papillion



Born in 1968 in the quaint town of Eunice, Louisiana, Judge Darrel James Papillion's journey from a bilingual child in St. Landry Parish to a distinguished federal judge is both inspiring and uniquely charming. Growing up in the rural community of Swords, nestled between Eunice and Opelousas, he was immersed in the rich cultural tapestry of Acadiana. He learned to speak English and French simultaneously as a child because he was nurtured by his Papillion grandparents, who lived next door and spoke only a few words of English. This early exposure not only enriched his cultural heritage but also equipped him with a unique perspective that would later serve him well in his legal career.

As a high school student, Judge Papillion's curiosity about the legal profession was piqued while working in the parish courthouse and Opelousas City Hall. Balancing his budding interest in law, he also embraced his passion for music and communication by working as a radio disc jockey at stations in Eunice and Lafayette, charming listeners in both French and English. This blend of public service and media experience hinted at his future roles as a communicator and advocate.

After earning his B.A. from Louisiana State University in 1990 and his J.D. from the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at LSU in 1994, Judge Papillion embarked on a legal career that showcased his dedication to justice and community service. From clerking for Associate Justice Catherine D. Kimball on the Louisiana Supreme Court to becoming a seasoned plaintiff's lawyer, he consistently championed the rights of injured workers, survivors of sexual abuse, and fought against voter disenfranchisement. His commitment to the legal profession is further evidenced by his leadership roles, including serving as President of the Baton Rouge Bar Association in 2014 and the Louisiana State Bar Association from 2016 to 2017. In addition to his legal practice, Darrel has shared his expertise as an adjunct professor at the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at LSU since 2000, influencing the next generation of legal minds.

In a lighthearted reflection on his professional habits, Judge Papillion once quipped about his dual approach to technology: he's either "the youngest old guy" who, at the time, still dictated and relied heavily on two legal assistants, or the "oldest young guy" who embraces new technology to stay at the cutting edge in handling his cases and law practice. This adaptability and willingness to blend traditional methods with modern advancements underscore his dynamic approach to the legal profession.

Beyond his legal endeavors, Judge Papillion is devoted to his family, crediting his

hardworking parents for instilling the value of education in him and his siblings. His father, a rural school bus driver and deputy sheriff, and his mother, who worked for the local school system, took immense pride in seeing all three of their children graduate from college. Judge Papillion's personal interests include a love for reading, particularly history and biographies, and he is a passionate LSU football fan, often seen cheering for the Tigers with unwavering enthusiasm.

In March 2023, President Joseph Biden nominated Judge Papillion to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, a position for which he was confirmed by the Senate in May 2023. His extensive legal experience, deep community roots, and unwavering commitment to justice make Judge Darrel J. Papillion a distinguished and respected figure on the federal bench. The FJA is immeasurably enhanced by members like Judge Papillion.

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thank you

As January ushers in a new board year, it also marks the conclusion of certain terms on the FJA Board of Directors. We thank the following members for their extraordinary dedication and hard work in support of the FJA. Over the past several years, your efforts have helped us achieve remarkable milestones.

Dana Christensen (D. Mont.)  
Mae D'Agostino (N.D.N.Y.)  
Sara Darrow (C.D. Ill.)  
Sara Ellis (N.D. Ill.)  
John J. McConnell, Jr. (D.R.I.)

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Congratulations

The FJA also congratulates and welcomes the following members starting a three-year term on the Board of Directors this year.

Victoria Calvert (N.D. Ga.)  
LaShonda Hunt (N.D. Ill.)  
Colleen Lawless (C.D. Ill.)  
Linda Lopez (S.D. Cal.)



# Committee Updates

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

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## Civics & Service

*Chair: Robin Rosenbaum*



The Civics & Service Committee continues its three major projects: the Naturalization Civics Challenge, the Clerkship Chats, and the Speech Bank. But in this issue of *The Bench Press*, we are proud to announce that we are now partnering with the National Constitution Center (“NCC”) on our Civics Challenge, and we will also be participating in the NCC’s Scholar Exchange Program.

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 naturalization ceremony in their home judicial district before a federal judge. 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/>

As for the NCC’s Scholar Exchange program, the NCC describes itself as “America’s leading platform for constitutional education and debate.” Its Scholar Exchange Program “gives students the opportunity to discuss constitutional topics with a lawyer, judge, or constitutional scholar and their peers from around the country.” Scholar Exchanges are virtual, usually occur on Zoom, and generally last 45 minutes. During the program, the scholar, NCC moderator, and class or classes of students discuss a topic related to the Constitution. The NCC maintains a list of classes teachers have requested, including the date, time, student grade level, and topic.

Once a class has been scheduled, the NCC provides the Zoom link as well as a content script

and PowerPoint for use. During the program, the NCC moderator shares the PowerPoint with the class and facilitates the discussion. The script and PowerPoint offer a framework for the discussion, but the NCC encourages scholars to include personal experiences and observations during class. Here's a link to the scripts and slideshows the program uses: [Scholar Exchanges \(For Scholars\) - Google Drive](#)

If you're interested in participating, you can email Kevin Lynch at the NCC at [klynch@constitutioncenter.org](mailto:klynch@constitutioncenter.org).

## International Rule of Law

*Chair: Cynthia M. Rufe*



### International Association of Judges

*promoting an independent judiciary worldwide*

#### CAPE TOWN NEWS PART II

This is the second part in a series of reports on the 66th Meeting of the International Association of Judges (“IAJ”) that took place in Cape Town, South Africa from October 18-23, 2024.



One of the significant foci of the 2024 Meeting was the effort to urge the United Nations to establish January 11th as the “International Day of Judicial Independence,” both as a symbol of a universal value of a democratic society and a tribute to those who risked their lives and freedom to defend it. See <https://forumfws.eu/apel-eng.pdf>.

Following on from this, Professor Margaret Satterthwaite, UN Special Rapporteur on Independence of Judges and Lawyers and a keynote speaker at the 2024 Meeting of the IAJ, reported to the United Nations on the work of the IAJ on the “International Day of Judicial Independence.” See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-independence-of-judges-and-lawyers>. In the release accompanying her statement, Professor Satterthwaite highlighted that January 20, 2025 commemorated the 5th anniversary of the 1000 Robes March in Warsaw, Poland, where judges from all over Europe came together in support of their Polish colleagues and Polish citizens to defend the Rule of Law and “protest against laws that fundamentally undermined the independence of the judiciary.” See <https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/11th-january-message-from-the-un-special-rapporteur-on-the-judicial-independence-day-1000-robles-march/>.

Look for CAPE TOWN NEWS PART III in the February newsletter to learn about the IAJ Education program themed on Artificial Intelligence for the Courts, highlighting lead presenters Margaret McKeown and Marilyn Huff. Also to be reported are final reports of the four Study Commissions and report of the geographical group ANAO, led by FJA Past-President Allyson Duncan, now a Vice-Chair of the IAJ.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leo M. Gordon, FJA Delegate to IAJ  
Cynthia M. Rufe, Chair, International Rule of Law Committee

## Membership

*Chair: Nannette Jolivette Brown*



On December 12, 2024, the Membership Committee hosted the first New Member Orientation via Zoom. Seven new members attended the orientation: Rich Federico (United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit), Jacquelyn Austin (United States District Court District of South Carolina), Jonathan Hawley (United States District Court Central District of Illinois), LaShonda Hunt (United States District Court Northern District of Illinois), Laura Provinzino (United States District Court District of Minnesota), Kelly Rankin (United States District Court District of Wyoming), and Julie Sneed (United States District Court Middle District of Florida). The new members were introduced to President-Elect Karen Schreier, Secretary Patty Shwartz, and Treasurer Mal Mannion. The Officers were joined by Nannette Jolivette Brown (Chair of the Membership Committee), Cathy Bissoon and Sara Darrow (Co-Chairs of the Quadrennial Committee), Albert Diaz (Chair of the Ethics Committee), Leo Gordon (Co-Chair of the Education and Pay and Benefits Committees), William Kuntz (Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee), Larry Piersol (Co-Chair of the Senior and Retired Judges Committee), Robin Rosenbaum (Chair of the Civics & Service Committee), and Mary Scriven (Chair of the Communications Committee). The committee chairs provided new members with an overview of the committees' goals and current efforts. The Membership Committee plans to hold these orientations quarterly to provide an opportunity for judges to learn more about the numerous benefits of membership.

As we enter a new year, our thoughts go out to all of those affected by the terrorist attack in New Orleans and the wildfires in Los Angeles.

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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).



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

Amanda K. Brailsford (D. Idaho)  
Matthew P. Brookman (S.D. Ind.)  
Michelle Williams Court (C.D. Cal.)  
Stephanie D. Davis (6th Cir.)  
Jonathan E. Hawley (C.D. Ill.)  
Shanlyn A.S. Park (D. Haw.)  
Joseph F. Saporito (M.D. Pa.)

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

Amir Ali (D.D.C.)  
Anthony J. Brindisi (N.D.N.Y.)  
Elizabeth C. Coombe (N.D.N.Y.)  
Catherine Henry (E.D. Pa.)  
Anne Hwang (C.D. Cal.)  
Mustafa Kasubhai (D. Or.)  
Brian E. Murphy (D. Mass.)  
Rebecca Pennell (E.D. Wash.)  
Sarah Russell (D. Conn.)

## Pay and Benefits

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



At the beginning of January, we all took a moment to review the monthly pay statement. That



review revealed an increase in each judge's salary due to the 1.7% COLA increase authorized by the President for federal employees effective January 1st.

Until recently, the annual COLA increase was not a given. As some may recall, judges' salaries were linked to congressional pay. Thus, if Congress chose not to give itself a COLA, judges' pay was similarly frozen. This was largely the situation for multiple years from the mid-1990s through the early 2010s. Indeed, judicial compensation declined 25% in real value over time.

Through the efforts of various colleagues and the FJA, along came several lawsuits, *Williams v. United States*, 240 F.3d 1019 (Fed. Cir. 2001), *Beer v. United States*, 696 F.3d 1174 (Fed. Cir. 2012), and *Barker v. United States*, No. 12-826c (Fed. Cl. 12-10-13), that resulted in the restoration of many but not all of the lost COLAs and the receipt of future annual COLAs for federal judges. Consequently, for the past 12 years, federal judges have benefited from the yearly pay adjustments, resulting in a current annual salary of \$247,400 for trial level judges and \$262,300 for Circuit judges. Congressional pay has not changed in that same period and remains frozen at \$174,000, which would be the trial court salary today had the FJA not pursued the litigation.

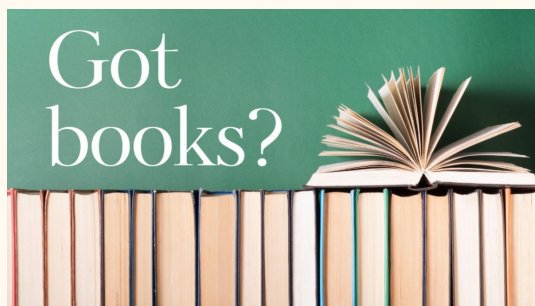
The FJA, and its Pay and Benefits Committee, do not take the annual COLA for granted. We remain vigilant in monitoring legislative or other developments that could impact judicial compensation, and we look for any opportunity to improve that compensation. Please realize that these COLA increases are the result of significant efforts over many years by multiple individuals connected to the FJA. If you are interested in working on compensation-related issues, please contact either of us.

## 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.)

# Announcements



## **Board of Directors Nominations and Elections**

The Board of Directors members in the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Federal, and D.C. circuits as well as the Court of International Trade will be soliciting nominations for board positions that will become vacant on December 31, 2025. Board members who are currently serving a term are eligible for nomination to serve a second consecutive term. In addition, vacancies will become available for positions held by board members who will be completing their second consecutive term. After a two-year hiatus, those members are eligible for reelection. We encourage those who have not yet served as well as those who have served in the past to consider serving on the Board.

Your circuit representatives will be working with the FJA's Executive Director to solicit nominations and conduct elections. Keep an eye out for the notices for your circuit. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Executive Director Jennifer Brinkley, FJA Secretary Judge Patty Shwartz, or your circuit's representative to the Board.



## **FJC Director Search**

The Board of the Federal Judicial Center has begun its search for a successor to John Cooke,

director of the Center, who will step down in August 2025. The Chief Justice has appointed a search committee of Circuit Judge Thomas Hardiman (Third Circuit), District Judge Sara Ellis (Northern District of Illinois), and Magistrate Judge Tim Baker (Southern District of Indiana) to make recommendations to the Board.

The Center was created in 1967 by statute as an independent agency in the judicial branch. The Center’s statutory mission is to “further the development and adoption of improved judicial administration in the courts of the United States” through research and analysis about the courts; education for judges and court staff; the study of federal judicial history; and, sharing information with, and about, the administration of justice in the courts of other countries.

The Center has a staff of 121. Its fiscal year 2024 appropriation was \$34,261,000.

The Board is seeking a highly qualified current or former Article III judge, bankruptcy judge, or magistrate judge for the position.

There are no mandatory criteria (including no mandatory retirement age). The Board will consider, among other things, applicants’ management and leadership skills and experience in education and research. Trial judge experience and experience in leadership positions, such as chief judge or Judicial Conference committee chair are advantageous, but not mandatory. It is important that the director have excellent interpersonal skills and leadership qualities; that the director be able to lead and to work effectively with others including judges, government officials, educators, researchers, and lawyers; that the director understand and is committed to the value of independent and objective research and education; and that the director have a broad knowledge of the judiciary and the issues it faces. The Board expects the director to commit to a term of at least four years, with the expectation that the tenure will not exceed seven years.

The committee will consider the applicants' willingness to move to Washington, D.C. or spend substantial time in Washington, DC as a factor in its decision. The person selected may be reimbursed for moving expenses.

The salary for the position is that of a district judge. An Article III judge selected as director will continue to receive their regular judicial salary.

To apply, please send a resume and cover letter electronically to [FJCDirectorSearch@fjc.gov](mailto:FJCDirectorSearch@fjc.gov).

To ensure full consideration, applications must be received by **Wednesday, February 5, 2025**.

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## **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.

# Upcoming Events



## **Webinar Coming Soon!**

### **How Can You Get Involved in FJA's Civics and Service Projects?**

The FJA's Civics and Service Committee creates civics and service projects for federal judges to participate in. In this webinar, the Civics and Service Committee highlights two of its ongoing civics and service projects that you can take part in. We'll hear from Judge Beth Bloom of the Southern District of Florida about the Civics Challenge, a program for high school students where the students take the Naturalization Test, and if they score at least 90%, they receive an "Excellent Citizen" certificate and are either invited to attend a local naturalization ceremony or can have a federal judge visit with their class by Zoom (or in person if the judge is able and prefers). Then we'll travel to the opposite corner of our country and hear from Judge Lauren King of the Western District of Washington about the Clerkship Chats program, where we organize and participate in judicial panels that educate law students from schools that do not traditionally send many students to federal clerkships about federal clerkships. Judges Bloom and King will explain each program in more detail and tell you how you can get involved!

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### **Judicial Independence and Integrity Webinar (Live!)**

**Tuesday, March 11, 2025, 12 pm PST/3 pm EST**

As Chief Justice Roberts underscored in his 2024 Year End Report, the recent surge of attacks on judges and courts undermines public confidence in the judiciary. Please join us for a candid conversation on these threats to the rule of law and what judges can do to uphold the integrity of our judicial system. This will be an off-the-record, confidential, and members-only discussion, to be facilitated by Jeremy Fogel, Executive Director of the Berkeley Judicial Institute. Be on the lookout for a survey soliciting your views on topics to be explored.

Hosted by The FJA Committee on Judicial Independence and Integrity

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## 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.

### February Edition | *The Bench Press*

Have a submission for the upcoming edition of The Bench Press? Please share it by **February 10, 2025**. 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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