

The Bench Press

The Federal Judges Association Newsletter

April 2025

Dear Federal Judges Association (FJA) Members:

Thank you, Michelle Childs, for your two years of dynamic leadership as President of FJA. Michelle has worked tirelessly to make FJA a better and stronger organization. In doing so, she opened up the lines of communications with you, our members, and encouraged your participation. We are so grateful to you, Michelle.



As my term as President begins, I am honored to serve in this role. The FJA officers and directors just finished their annual meeting in Philadelphia. I have never seen such an energized FJA Board. Everyone wants to do what they can to protect the rule of law and the safety and security of judges, who feel threatened for doing their jobs. And now we need your help. If you are interested in serving on any of the FJA committees, please let me know. I will be making committee appointments by the end of April. The committees and their chairs are:

- Bylaws: Patty Shwartz
- Civics & Service: Lauren King
- Communications: Leslie Abrams Gardner
- Judicial Independence: Beth Bloom
- Legislative: Tim Reif and Jonathan Kobes
- Membership: Nannette Jolivet Brown and William Kuntz
- Education: Pamela Pepper and Mike Newman
- Judicial Integrity and Ethics: Aleta Trauger
- International Rule of Law: J. Michelle Childs
- Quadrennial: Cathy Bissoon and Sara Darrow
- Security: Esther Salas
- Senior & Retired Judges: Lawrence Piersol
- Nominating: J. Michelle Childs
- Past Presidents Advisory Committee: M. Margaret McKeown
- Pay & Benefits: Dan Polster and Mark Kearney
- Strategic Planning: Leo M. Gordon

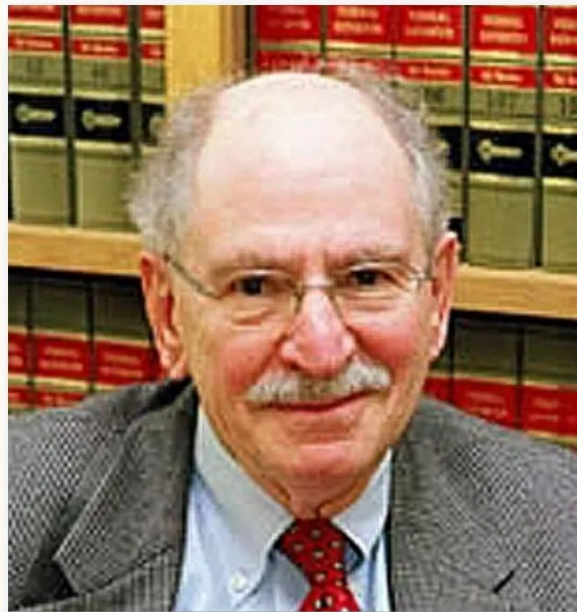
Now is your opportunity to become involved with the FJA. The Judiciary is stronger if we are all working together. Just email me and let me know what committee you are interested in serving on.

Finally, I encourage you to participate in Law Day events next Thursday, May 1st and throughout the month of May. President Eisenhower declared May 1 to be Law Day in the United States in 1958 and it has become a national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law in a free society. Whether you are speaking to children or adults, Law Day provides an opportunity to recognize the role of the courts in a democracy and the importance of the rule of law. Your participation in Law Day events carries great weight in your local communities—so get out there and celebrate Law Day.

Sincerely,

Karen Schreier
President, Federal Judges Association

Judge Alan Harris Nevas
Past FJA President
(1997-1999)



On April 19, 2025, Judge Alan Harris Nevas, Past President of the FJA, died at the age of 97. Judge Nevas dedicated his life to service to his country and to the rule of law. After earning his Bachelor of Laws from New York University School of Law in 1951, Judge Nevas maintained a private practice in Westport, Connecticut from 1951-1981. Judge Nevas served in the United States Army as a Sergeant First Class from 1952 to 1954. Much of his legal career was dedicated to public service, including his three terms in the Connecticut House of Representatives (1971–1977), Justice of the Peace in Westport (1976-1981), and United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut (1981-1985). Judge Nevas was nominated by President Reagan to the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut in 1985, and he served on the court until his retirement in 2009.

Judge Nevas was an active member of the FJA and was a leader in the fight for pay equity and pay restoration. When elected Seventh President of the FJA in 1997, Judge Nevas stated, "I set as my goal the repeal of Section 140 and de-linkage from congressional pay." Section 140 provided that the salaries of judges may not be increased without a separate act of Congress. Judge Nevas worked tirelessly in pursuit of this goal, championing the passing of

H.R. 875 and S. 394, which promised COLAs, de-linkage and repeal of Section 140. His efforts resulted in a 2.3 percent COLA for judges in 1998, but did not have the permanent effect he and the FJA were seeking. Also, while President of FJA, Judge Nevas proposed the idea of having members' dues withheld from their monthly salaries rather than requiring members to send annual dues payments. This increased member retention and provided a more stable budget for the association.

We are thankful for everything Judge Nevas did on behalf of FJA and our heartfelt thoughts go out to his family during this time.

The Propriety of Public Speech by Federal Judges



I'm a federal judge, and I want to speak. What can I say? What topics are off limits? What is appropriate? Is there any guidance? Many of us have asked some variation of these questions during our tenure. Fortunately, the Code of Conduct for United States Judges (the "Code of Conduct") and related Advisory Opinions from the Committee on Codes of Conduct provide guidance on the ethical parameters for federal judges who wish speak publicly on issues related to the judiciary. Please click [HERE](#) for a link to Judicial Ethics Resources for Federal Judges Regarding Civic Engagement & Public Speaking.

Knowing what we can say is the first step. But how do we say it? Judge Esther Salas is a fierce advocate for judicial security, who after consulting with ethics experts and receiving guidance on the parameters and propriety of her public statements, has spoken to numerous news outlets and given scores of speeches advocating for the Daniel A. Claitor Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2022 and in defense of the independence of the judiciary. Please click [HERE](#) for a link to a recent speech given by Judge Salas. For additional guidance and inspiration, the Members Only Section of the FJA Website contains a speech bank to help you get started. (Please email fja@federaljudgesassoc.org if you need your login information for the Members Only Section.) Keep reading below for more information from our Ethics Committee on how Federal Judges can speak within our ethical bounds.

Judicial Ethical
Resources

Judge Salas Speech

Speech Bank



ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

APRIL



Member Spotlight

The FJA spotlights Judge Howard F. Sachs



Born in 1925 in Kansas City, Missouri, Judge Howard Sachs' life has been deeply intertwined with the city he calls home. He grew up in Kansas City, attending Southwest High School in the Brookside neighborhood. After beginning his legal career by clerking for Federal Judge Albert Ridge at the Western District of Missouri, Judge Sachs devoted nearly 30 years to private practice in Kansas City, building a distinguished career rooted in his hometown. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter appointed him as a district judge for the Western District of Missouri, making Judge Sachs the first native-born Kansas Citian to serve in that capacity. With 45 years of honorable service on the bench, Judge Sachs' commitment to justice has been unwavering. In recognition of his lifelong dedication to Kansas City, the city honored him with a street naming, celebrating both his and his family's legacy in the community.

Judge Sachs' devotion to Kansas City and his country has been evident throughout his entire life, including his service in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After high school, he served as an electronic technician's mate aboard the U.S.S. South Dakota, which was stationed in Tokyo Bay during the Japanese surrender. Upon returning from military service, Judge Sachs earned a bachelor's degree from Williams College in 1947 and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1950.

While clerking for Judge Ridge at the Western District of Missouri from 1950 to 1951, Judge Sachs assisted in a landmark civil rights case that challenged the "separate but equal" doctrine—months before the *Brown* decision. At the time, Kansas City public swimming pools were segregated—whites swam at Swope Park Pool, while blacks used the smaller Parade Park Pool. Judge Sachs helped draft an opinion that held the pools were not equal, ultimately ordering the integration of the Swope Park Pool.

Judge Sachs has remained a steadfast advocate for civil rights throughout his career. He played a key role in drafting the 1962 city ordinance that ended segregation in public accommodations and is credited as a driving force behind the integration of the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association (formerly the Kansas City Bar Association). Prior to 1955, the KCMBA was exclusively white and male. After the bar leadership rejected the applications of three black attorneys, Sachs and 15 other attorneys successfully pushed for the admission of black lawyers to the bar. Today, Judge Sachs is the only surviving member of those 16 advocates.

Judge Sachs' reputation mirrors the excellence of his legal career. Paul Donnelly, a fellow clerk at the Western District of Missouri and a close friend of Judge Sachs for over 30 years, expressed his admiration: "In his first decade on the bench, Judge Sachs was viewed as the court's intellectual. By mid-career, he was also recognized as the workhorse of the court, the judge who logged the most time in the courtroom. But throughout, his hallmark has been an impeccable reputation for fairness. And that opinion comes from every segment of the practicing bar." Charles Thomas, one of Judge Sachs' former colleagues, emphasized his exceptional qualities: "He has a towering intellect and yet is utterly free of arrogance." Judge Sachs' childhood friend, Morton Sosland, provided a heartfelt reflection: "Howard's commitment to securing the facts, his probity in deciding what is best to do, his willingness to listen to all sides, and his sureness and determination to search for what is right makes this lifelong friend someone I and a whole lot of other people look to with total reliance on his intelligence and character. No, he wasn't called 'Judge Sachs' when we grew up together, but he should have been."

While Judge Sachs is regarded as a Kansas City legend, his influence extends far beyond the city limits. His legacy of fairness, civil rights advocacy, and legal excellence has impacted not just Kansas City, but the broader legal community and the nation as a whole.

Announcements

The Federal Bar Association Has Graciously Extended a Free Honorary Membership to All Federal Judges

The Judiciary Division of the Federal Bar Association consists of more than 2,100 federal and state judges. Our Article III committees include the Federal Appellate Judges, chaired by Circuit Judge Veronica Rossman, and Federal Trial Judges, chaired by District Judge Iain Johnston. The Judiciary Division improves the administration of justice by representing the interests of our members, involving others in our work through educational programs and activities, and assisting in the work of the Federal Bar Association.



Federal Bar Association

You are invited to take full advantage of your honorary membership, available to **all** active,

senior, and retired judges of the federal bench. Your honorary membership is with the national FBA as well as your local FBA chapter and the Judiciary Division. You will have full rights and privileges of membership and are exempt from the payment of dues. You may accept your honorary membership by completing a quick form at www.fedbar.org/honorary-membership.

Click the button below to see all of your available benefits. If you have questions, feel free to reach out to **Stacy King**, Executive Director of the FBA.

[Learn More](#)

Committee Updates



Interested in volunteering on an FJA committee? Click the Volunteer button below to complete our volunteer form.

[Volunteer](#)

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

Ethics

Chair: Aleta A. Trauger



REMINDERS: Financial Disclosure Reports must be filed by **May 15**. The 2024 Governance and Education Travel Report (formerly Non-Case Related Travel Report) must be filed by **June 1**. Reports about attendance at privately funded educational programs are due **within thirty (30) days of attendance at the program**. Here is a [link](#) to a Memorandum from the Administrative Office (which you should have received by email), about the Travel Report that includes a helpful chart comparing the requirements for these three kinds of reports.

Also attached is a PowerPoint prepared by committee member Bob Jonker, who serves as Chair of the Judicial Conference Committee on Codes of Conduct, with helpful advice as to what judges may and may not ethically speak about in this climate where attacks on federal judges are escalating. He references Chief Justice Roberts' 2024 Year-end Report as an exemplar of remarks that do not contravene ethical restrictions.

A list of the committee members is available on the FJA website, and we would welcome others. Please contact Chair Aleta Trauger should you wish to join the FJA Ethics Committee.

[AO Memo March 2025](#)

[Jonker PowerPoint](#)

Judicial Independence

Chair: Beth Bloom

Champions for Justice

The strength of our democracy depends on the public's respect for the rule of law. The public must understand how our government works and have confidence in the work of judges and the judiciary. Unfortunately, there has been an alarming increase in verbal and physical attacks on judges by individuals who disagree with the judges' rulings. Some of those verbal attacks are made by our leaders — on both sides of the political spectrum — and undermine our democracy.

As judges, we are ethically prohibited from speaking about the cases assigned to us or in defense of other judges' decisions. Judges need **Champions for Justice (CFJ)** stakeholders to promptly respond to unjust criticism of judges and educate the public about civility, our democracy and the importance of an independent judiciary. The CFJ effort is consistent with the FJA mission to cooperate with others to strengthen our system of justice.

The Judicial Independence Committee's objective is to develop a network and structure with our CFJ stakeholders on those responsive and proactive efforts. Educating the public is vital because informed citizens are democracy's best defense against misinformation. A recent study from the Annenberg Public Policy Center revealed that less than half of U.S. adults (47%) could name our three branches of government and the work of each branch.

The CFJ stakeholders will include:

- Retired judges and leaders who can speak to the importance of independent judicial system.
- Constitutional law professors featured on the media; and
- Leaders of bar associations, including the American Bar Association, Federal Bar Association, American Board of Trial Advocates, American College of Trial Lawyers.

There are CFJ stakeholder networks that already exist. The **American Bar Association** that has a *Rapid Response to Fake News, Misleading Statements, and Unjust Criticism* from the Standing Committee on the American Judicial System. Learn More [HERE](#).

The **American Board of Trial Advocates** has a Judicial Independence Committee that established a protocol for responding to criticism of judges and each of its 96 chapters has a Rapid Response Team. Learn More [HERE](#).

ABOTA has published a white paper on "Preserving a Fair, Impartial and Independent Judiciary. Read paper [HERE](#).

The **American College of Trial Lawyers** has a Judicial Independence Committee and responds to unfair criticism among its 62 Chapters. Learn More [HERE](#).

Recently, on April 15, the *Speak Up for Justice* event took place. This virtual nationwide live event had over 7,000 in attendance and featured U.S. District Judge and FJA Chair of the Judicial Security Committee, Esther Salas; Dean of Berkeley Law School, Erwin Chemerinsky; California Associate Justice, Eileen C. Moore; U.S. District Court Judge (ret.), Paul Grimm; and Special Master 9/11 Fund, Kenneth R. Feinberg. The webinar was moderated by attorney and organizer, Paul R. Kiesel. Each speaker stressed that to protect our rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, we must respond quickly, professionally, and in a non-partisan manner to unfair attacks and to help the public understand our system of justice.

On May 1, many organizations are hosting a *National Law Day of Action* and each attorney will be reaffirming their Attorney's Oath, to reiterate every attorney's role as a guardian of the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. Access the webpage [HERE](#).

Many state court judges are also speaking up, including the Joint Statement by National Association of Women Judges and National Judicial College. The California Judges Association has a Judicial Fairness Coalition Website and prepared statements to educate the public. Access statements [HERE](#).

The Judicial Independence Committee hopes to continue efforts to educate the public and to make available those educational tools on the basics of civics and the role of the judicial branch, such as *Courts and Civility*, the Bolch Institute's *Civics Break*, and the U.S. Court's website of *Civic Engagement* resources. Please join our efforts.

Membership



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

May Kay Costello (E.D. Pa.)
Sharad H. Desai (D. Ariz.)
Melissa R. DuBose (D.R.I.)
Anne Hwang (C.D. Cal.)
Sherri Lydon (D.S.C.)
Brian E. Murphy (D. Mass.)
Serena Raquel Murillo (C.D. Cal.)
Anne M. Nardacci (N.D.N.Y.)
Eric C. Schulte (D.S.D.)
Sparkle L. Sooknanan (D.D.C.)
Trina L. Thompson (N.D. Cal.)
Gail A. Weilheimer (E.D. Pa.)

In Memoriam

The FJA mourns the loss of the following members:



Robert E. Jones passed away on March 29, 2025. Judge Jones of the District of Oregon served as a federal judge for 35 years after 34 years service as a Circuit Judge and Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court. During his judicial service, Judge Jones presided over national cases that led to major settlements for defective breast implants and faulty siding for homes and regional cases that sent terrorist sympathizers to prison and established payments for men abused by a priest. Judge Jones formerly served as the president of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association, taught at Lewis & Clark Law School and the American Academy of Judicial Education, and was a member of the National Judicial College.

Malcolm F. Marsh passed from this life on March 15th 2025 at the age of 96. Judge Marsh served as a federal judge in the District of Oregon for 27 years. He was happily married to

Sharon (Shari) Long for almost 56 years until her passing. They had 3 children, 7 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. To his family and friends he was loved and loved well until the end. In his work as a lawyer and judge, he sought justice, loved mercy and walked humbly with his God.

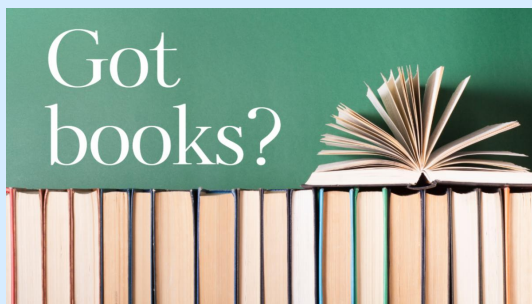
Quadrennial

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 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.)

Members in the News

District of Delaware Law Day & Mock Trial -- On January 22, FJA member, **Judge Maryellen Noreika** and Judge Sherry Fallon hosted over 100 students from Nativity Preparatory School of Wilmington and Serviam Girls Academy for “Law Day.” The students participated in a mock trial on “Texting while Driving.” After the trial, attorneys from Richards, Layton, & Finger spoke with the students about their experiences as lawyers.

FJA Member, **Judge James Shadid** has been named the new President of Bradley University. The Bradley Board of Trustees unanimously voted to approve Judge Shadid at its Board of Trustees meeting on March 12. Judge Shadid is a 1979 Bradley graduate and becomes the 13th president in the university’s 128-year history. As Senator Durbin noted at the time of Judge Shadid's confirmation, Judge Shadid was the first Arab American to serve as a State judge in Illinois and became the only Arab-American Federal judge in the State of Illinois. [Read More](#).

May Edition | *The Bench Press*

Have a submission for the upcoming edition of The Bench Press? Please share it by **May 8, 2025**. We would love to share your special news with the membership. [Email us!](#)

[Email Us Your News](#)



Karen E. Schreier
President

Leslie Abrams Gardner
Communications Committee Chair

Federal Judges Association | fja@federaljudgesassoc.org



Try email marketing for free today!