

# The Bench Press

*The Federal Judges Association Newsletter*  
May 2025

Dear Federal Judges Association (FJA) Members:

As we approach Memorial Day, it is a time to honor and mourn U.S. military personnel who died while serving in the Armed Forces. It is also considered the unofficial beginning of summer in the United States. And in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where I spend a lot of time, it is known as the beginning of tourist season. A time when the quiet, peaceful days of winter and spring and the pungent smell of pine trees is replaced by the rumble of motorcycles and the bark of four-wheelers kicking up dust on the road right behind our cabin. I already miss spring!



Many of our members celebrated Law Day by engaging in civic education and used the opportunity to speak to students and adults about the role of the judiciary and the rule of law. If you did give remarks, please send a copy of your remarks to [fja@FederalJudgesAssoc.org](mailto:fja@FederalJudgesAssoc.org), so they can be added to the FJA speech bank.

It is notable that three members of the Supreme Court-- Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justices Ketanji Brown Jackson and Sonia Sotomayor—recently gave public remarks on the issue of ensuring that judicial independence is preserved for the protection of our Constitution and the people of the United States. Justice Jackson encouraged judges to engage in civic education, but also suggested “that we look inward and focus on supporting one another during these challenging times--helping each other to *hold on* despite the difficulties—and continually reminding ourselves of the core values that guide us in our daily work.” Her point really struck home with me. Many of us and our colleagues are confronted with high-profile, fast-moving cases in which we must make a consequential decision. We need to remember to step back, take a breath, and take the time to support each other.

Thank you to the new committee chairs and committee members. FJA is most successful when our committees are working hard on our behalf. The committee membership can be found [HERE](#).

Sincerely,

Karen Schreier  
President, Federal Judges Association



## Member Spotlight

### The FJA spotlights Chief Judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood



Chief Judge Frances **Tydingco-Gatewood**'s commitment to serving the public is strong and steadfast. Judge Tydingco-Gatewood was raised in Mangilao, Guam, attending George Washington Senior High School. In 1980, she graduated from Marquette University with a Bachelor of Arts in political science. After graduating from law school from the University of Missouri- Kansas City School of Law in 1983, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood began her legal career as a law clerk for the Honorable Forest W. Hannah of Jackson County Circuit Courts in Missouri. Although her educational pursuits took her elsewhere, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood always knew she wanted to return to Guam.

In 1984, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood became the first woman of Chamorro and Pohpeian descent to be Assistant Attorney General in the Prosecution Division of Guam where she

prosecuted major felony cases from 1984 to 1988. In 1988, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood became an Assistant Prosecutor with the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office in Missouri. There, she tried major felony cases and served as the Trial Team Leader for the Sex Crimes Unit. After two years in this role, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood returned to Guam and once again made history, becoming the first woman of Chamorro and Pohpeian descent to be Chief Prosecutor.

Judge Tydingco-Gatewood's judicial service began in 1994 when she was appointed and unanimously confirmed to be a trial judge in the Superior Court of Guam. From 1994 to 2002, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood oversaw numerous cases, including complex litigation cases, high profile criminal cases, family court, juvenile court, traffic court, and probate matters. Notably, the judge presided over the Royal Palm Resort Lawsuit which was one of the most complex civil litigation trials in the Pacific Rim. During this time, the Honorable Mary M. Schroeder, then-Chief Judge of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, appointed Judge Tydingco-Gatewood to be a designated federal judge for the District Court of Guam. Judge Tydingco-Gatewood continued to demonstrate her commitment to serving Guam over the course of her career. On September 1, 2001, then-Governor Carl T.C. Gutierrez appointed Judge Tydingco-Gatewood to the Supreme Court of Guam as an Associate Justice. As a testament to her astute legal mind and dedication to the legal field, the twenty-sixth Guam Legislature unanimously confirmed her appointment. Judge Tydingco-Gatewood served on the Supreme Court from February 8, 2002 to October 27, 2006.

On April 25, 2006, President George Bush nominated Judge Tydingco-Gatewood to the Federal District Court of Guam. After her confirmation, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood took the Oath of Office on October 30, 2006 and became the nation's first Chamorro/Popheian woman federal judge. Judge Tydingco-Gatewood is also one of only two judges in the federal judiciary who sits as both a district judge and Chief Bankruptcy Judge. In May of 2016, President Barack Obama renominated Judge Tydingco-Gatewood for a second term as Chief Judge of the Federal District Court of Guam.

In addition to her impressive legal career, Judge Tydingco-Gatewood has raised three sons, Daniel, Michael, and Stephan, with her husband of 24 years, Dr. Robert Gatewood. Her family has been a continuing source of encouragement and support.

## Committee Updates

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

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### Ethics

*Chair: Aleta A. Trauger*



**REMINDER:** 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 three kinds of reports.

AO Memo March 2025

Jonker PowerPoint

## International Rule of Law

*Chair: J. Michelle Childs*



**International Association of Judges**

*promoting an independent judiciary worldwide*

### *European Association of Judges Letter of Solidarity*

The following letter was adopted during the meeting of the European Association of Judges on May 9, 2025:

The Presidency Committee of the International Association of Judges (IAJ) issued a statement in April 2025, stressing, that pressuring or intimidating judges over their judicial decisions is unacceptable. The role of judges is to ensure justice and protecting citizens' rights. Disagreement with court decisions should be pursued through legal channels, not through public attacks. The IAJ stands firmly against efforts to weaken the judiciary or turn it into a political instrument. Such intimidations must end.

The European Association of Judges (EAJ) and its member associations are following the recent developments in the United States with great concern. In their meeting in Yerevan/Armenia on May 9, 2025, the Board of the EAJ and the 34 associations of judges represented at the meeting unanimously decided to reach out to their fellow judges currently under pressure in the United States.

We hereby express our solidarity with the judges in the USA. The role of judges is vital to uphold the rule of law. There is no democracy without a strong and independent judiciary.

## Membership

*Chairs: Nannette Jolivet Brown and William F. Kuntz, II*

The Membership Committee is grateful for the work of our of committee members and circuit liaisons that help spread the word about the importance of the FJA and welcome judges into the membership.

### Membership Committee Members

Janet Arterton	Thomas Kleeh	Robert Rossiter
Stephen Bough	Sheryl Lipman	Esther Salas
Victoria Calvert	Gina Mendez-Miró	Patti Saris
James G. Carr	Jacqueline Nguyen	Karen Schreier
Marcia Crone	Maryellen Noreika	Leonard Stark
Haywood Gilliam	J. Paul Oetken	Holly Teeter
Rebecca Grady Jennings	Cornelia Pillard	Cory Wilson
Pamela Harris	Tanya Pratt	
LaShonda Hunt	Timothy Reif	

A Circuit Liaison is a member or members chosen from each circuit to be the direct contact responsible for following up with newly appointed judges upon learning of their confirmation and with sitting judges who have not yet decided to join the FJA. The Circuit Liaisons will be copied on all communications between the FJA and the newly appointed judge, beginning with an introductory letter sent to the newly appointed judge from the FJA president and continuing to the email confirmation of their membership and welcome to the organization. The following Board and Executive Committee members have agreed to be “Circuit Liaisons.”

### Circuit Liaisons to the Membership Committee

Patti Saris (First Circuit)  
Gina Mendez-Miró (First Circuit)  
Janet Arterton (Second Circuit)  
J. Paul Oetken (Second Circuit)  
Esther Salas (Third Circuit)  
Maryellen Noreika (Third Circuit)  
Pamela Harris (Fourth Circuit)  
Thomas Kleeh (Fourth Circuit)  
Marcia Crone (Fifth Circuit)  
James Carr (Sixth Circuit)  
Sheryl Lipman (Sixth Circuit)  
LaShonda Hunt (Seventh Circuit)  
Stephen Bough (Eighth Circuit)  
Robert Rossiter (Eighth Circuit)  
Haywood Gilliam (Ninth Circuit)  
Jacqueline Nguyen (Ninth Circuit)  
Holly Teeter (Tenth Circuit)  
Victoria Calvert (Eleventh Circuit)  
Cornelia Pillard (DC Circuit)  
Leonard Stark (Federal Circuit)



Congratulations to them for their selection and we thank them for their willingness to serve.

Everyone can help with recruiting judges to the FJA! If you would like us to invite a judge in your circuit to join the FJA, please contact your circuit liaison or the FJA management team at [fja@federaljudgesassoc.org](mailto:fja@federaljudgesassoc.org).

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

Sanket Jayshukh Bulsara (E.D.N.Y.)

Sarah Morgan Davenport (D.N.M.)

Andre B. Mathis (6th Cir.)

Jeannette A. Vargas (S.D.N.Y.)

Lisa Wen-Jia Wang (C.I.T.)

## Pay & Benefits

*Chairs: Mark Kearney and Dan A. Polster*



### **Do I now need Professional Liability Insurance (PLI)?**

Federal judges can find comfort in long-standing absolute immunity granted to their decisions when acting within their scope of judicial authority. But several judges recently inquired as to available insurance for items that may not be directly related to their judicial authority. Judges may be concerned about the costs of counsel, for example, if challenged by their law clerks or judicial assistants for employment decisions outside the traditional judge role. Or judges may need to pay fees in retaining qualified lawyers to assist in responding to congressional challenges, such as impeachment articles. We wanted to offer some solace in reminding you of the immunity, and, in making you aware of Professional Liability Insurance (PLI) that you can purchase at a relatively modest annual premium. As an extra benefit, the Administrative Office will reimburse you for half of your annual premium. For reimbursement, you will need to fill out the AO-72 (Professional Liability Insurance

Reimbursement Form) and submit the form and supporting documentation to the AO at [fiscal@uscourts.gov](mailto:fiscal@uscourts.gov).

Designed to address the evolving risks under the Judicial Code of Conduct and federal personnel rules, PLI typically covers a wide range of claims, including harassment and retaliation under the revised Code, as well as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and whistleblower complaints. It also generally provides protection against ethics allegations, such as improper courtroom behavior or abuse of authority and Congressional investigations, including impeachment. With defined coverage limits and knowledgeable in-house claims professionals, PLI offers comprehensive protection tailored to the unique exposures faced by the Federal Judiciary.

While the risks facing federal judges are rare, they are significant. As with many types of insurance, PLI allows you to transfer the financial risk to the insurance company, offering a more advantageous solution than bearing the full cost of a claim. Three brokers currently provide PLI coverage to federal judges: Starr-Wright USA, Feds Protection, and Career-Guard. Each of these programs has a long history of serving federal employees and offers similar baseline coverage options. Like many insurance programs, PLI offers individuals a range of coverage options that allow them to be customized to meet a person's particular comfort level. These policies typically provide \$200,000 for defense in administrative or disciplinary proceedings, \$2 million for indemnity and defense in civil suits in personal capacity, and up to \$100,000 for criminal investigations arising from acts, errors, or omissions within the scope of federal judicial duties.

The annual premiums for this level of coverage presently range from: Starr-Wright USA (\$474), Feds Protection (\$390), and Career-Guard (\$390). Please recall federal judges purchasing this PLI policy are eligible for a 50% reimbursement from the Administrative Office upon proof of purchase.

For further discussion or to receive a needs comparison quote please contact our retained insurance consultant **James De La Torre** at [jdelatorre@fedadvantage.com](mailto:jdelatorre@fedadvantage.com) or by phone at 415-202-6370.

**Quadrennial**  
**April 27-29, 2026 in Washington, D.C.**  
*Co-Chairs: Cathy Bissoon and Sara Darrow*



# Eleventh Quadrennial Conference

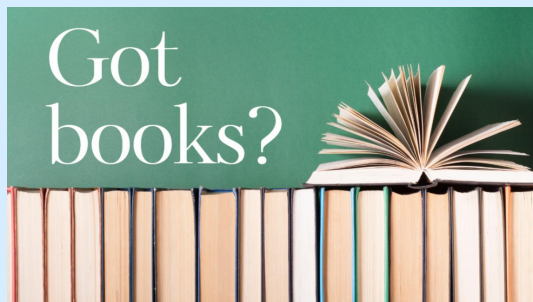
*The "I"s have it!*

APRIL  
27-29  
2026

*Independence, Inspiration, Insights & Integrity*

OMNI  
SHOREHAM  
WASHINGTON, DC

## 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



Past FJA President Judge J. Michelle Childs and Justice Sonia Sotomayor were recently interviewed during an ABA event at the National Museum of American History. The discussion touched on judicial independence, the importance of diversity, and the duty of lawyers to “stand up for people who can’t do it themselves.” [Read More](#).

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### **Judge Robin Rosenberg to Lead Judiciary Research Center**

Chief Justice John Roberts has announced that U.S. District Judge Robin L. Rosenberg of the Southern District of Florida will be the next director of the federal judiciary's research center.

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### **June Edition | *The Bench Press***

Have a submission for the upcoming edition of The Bench Press? Please share it by **June 12, 2025**. We would love to share your special news with the membership. [Email us!](#)

[Email Us Your News](#)



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**Karen E. Schreier**  
President

**Leslie Abrams Gardner**  
Communications Committee Chair

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