

The Rundown Volume 4

Hello,

This is the fourth release of the Rundown, a series of broadcasts aimed at explaining some of what the American Judges Association (AJA), and I as your president, do on behalf of the members of the Association.

Recently I was invited to do a presentation on drugged driving for the Texas Municipal Judges. My co-presenter, Judge Harvey Hoffman, and I had quite a good time, in part, because the conference was held in Austin, Texas. If you haven't been to Austin, you should consider going for many reasons including the Driskill Grill, an amazing restaurant.

The other reason it was a good time was the conference attendees. They were very attentive, and asked lots of good questions. Perhaps they were so attentive as a result of my offering a one year free membership in the AJA to any judge who answered a question correctly.

During one of the breaks, a judge approached to give me his business card for his free membership and we had a brief conversation. Initially we talked about the legalization of marijuana in Colorado and Washington State. He asked if I thought the judges in Colorado or Washington State could use marijuana. I told him I did not think the vast majority of judges were doing so and we agreed that no sitting judge should use marijuana, as it is still illegal under federal statute. We also agreed it would be an act of hypocrisy to do so. At that point the conversation evolved into discussion of judicial courage. We spoke about the need for judges to do the right thing even in the face of intense pressure to do something different.



Reflecting on that conversation later that evening, I thought about one of my heroes, Judge Harold Froehlich, former Treasurer of the AJA, now retired. Prior to becoming a judge, Harold was elected as Republican Representative to Congress from Wisconsin in 1972. As he was a lawyer, his first assignment was to the House Judiciary Committee just as the Watergate scandal was breaking. Harold had supported President Nixon's re-election, but in spite of that he was one of the seven Republicans who voted for at least one of the articles of impeachment.

Harold and I have had several conversations about his decision and its consequences. He knew it was a controversial decision and that it was the reason he was not re-elected. He has also said that he would do the exact same thing knowing what the consequences would

be. It was simply the right decision.

Last year the AJA created an Award for Judicial Courage and named it the Judge Harold Froehlich Award in honor of Harold's many acts of courage. If you know of a judge who has shown judicial courage making a difficult decision, please let me know. If you want to know more about the Froehlich Award you can go to this link: <http://amjudges.org/awards/pdfs/2014-Froehlich-Award.pdf>

The AJA is the voice of the judiciary, and as its voice we want to both recognize and stand with any judge who has the courage to make a hard decision in the face of adversity. Being a judge is not always easy, and hard decisions are often the most lonely, but as a member of the AJA you are never alone, we will stand with you.

That is it for now. I hope to write again soon. Thanks and be well. Brian