

President's Column

Chris Williams

This is a very exciting time for the American Judges Association.

I recently attended the annual meeting of the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) and the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) in Seattle, Washington. At that meeting there was a great concern and desire on the part of all the national associations connected to the National Center for State Courts to work more closely with each other on projects that would be of joint concern to all associations.

To further this objective, COSCA's Policy and Liaison Committee appointed Dr. Hugh Collins of Louisiana as liaison to the AJA. It is my hope that we continue this connection with other associations and that we continue our liaison, through our president and president-elect, not only to CCJ and COSCA, but also to the State Justice Institute, the National Association of State Judicial Educators (NASJE), the National Association for Court Management (NACM), the National Conference of Court Public Information Officers, the National College of Probate Judges, the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts, the National Court Reporters Association, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, and the National College of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. A closer relationship with these associations would be of great benefit to us.

We are now in the process, after approval by the Board of Governors, of strengthening these relationships by having joint meetings with other associations. It is my honor to announce to you that we are planning a joint meeting between AJA, NACM, and NASJE at the year 2004 AJA Midyear Meeting in Savannah, Georgia. We anticipate that NASJE will be putting on an educational program for AJA and NACM at this conference. We will be looking for some education programs involving issues of the courts and judicial-branch education through NASJE.

The National Center for State Courts is very excited about this joint session, with the hope that in the future AJA and NACM will evolve into closely interacting groups, along with NASJE, much as the relationship between CCJ and COSCA has developed over the years. I am very supportive of this proposi-

tion and hope that our association will follow and attempt to strengthen our involvement with other members of the national judicial community.

I believe our mission in these liaisons should be to provide more of a national forum to assist state court judges in the development of a more just, effective, and efficient system of justice. We can do that by identifying issues and developing policy standards relating to the administration of the judicial system and relating to the future education of judges through the mainstream of core curriculum and not through the basis of information that is beneficial for us to get reelected. We need to get back to the core subjects, like evidence, civil procedure, criminal procedure, and procedure of courts.

It is my hope that in this network of exchange of information from different associations, we will transfer ideas and methods of improving state courts. This will take a lot of cooperation, consultation, and exchange of information among our organizations to assist us in perfecting judicial branch education and to improve judicial understanding concerning the court system. I hope that we will be

more involved in implementation of national issues in the future by our association with other judicial groups.

Good relationships with these groups must be maintained in order for us to be inclusive and more dynamic in the national scene. This will be a great opportunity for us to improve our judicial education and at the same time to expand our national presence. In addition, I hope that in our expansion of our association we are able to encourage membership with both Canadian and Mexican judges. I will be attending a meeting with the provincial trial judges in Canada in September. From that meeting, I hope that we are able to secure more membership in the association and to encourage more Canadian judges to be involved in AJA.

I'm excited about our future. I hope that you will work hard with me in trying to improve and expand our national appearance and image as the only independent association of judges at all levels. I have enjoyed being your president and I will continue to work after my term to ensure that AJA stays in the forefront in the national scene.

