



*Toni Higginbotham is sworn in as AJA's new president by her mother, Mary Kathryn Manning, at the annual conference in New Orleans.*

## **New Orleans Hosts AJA 2012 Annual Conference**

"Innovative Judging" was the theme of the American Judges Association's 2012 Annual Conference, held September 30-October 5 at the Sheraton New Orleans. This conference was conducted in partnership with the Louisiana Judicial College Fall Conference.

The conference theme was carried through by the many educational sessions devoted to helping AJA members to become better judges. Educational sessions included veterans treatment courts, courts and the media, use of technology to supervise defendants, and the always popular and enlightening review of recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions. One session took up the importance of wellness and fitness for judges--particularly through a proper diet.



There were many pleasant social events, as well. Judges participated in a Red Mass, which is generally celebrated at the beginning of the judicial year, at the St. Louis Cathedral, in addition to the annual AJA Awards/AJF Luncheon and a reception hosted by the Louisiana 4th and 5th Circuit Judges at the Riverview Room of the Jackson Brewery.

AJA's 2013 Annual Conference will be held September 22-27 at the Fairmont Orchid, Kohala Coast, Hawaii.

### **Future AJA Annual Educational Conferences**

2013 Annual Conference  
Kohala Coast, Hawaii  
The Fairmont Orchid  
September 22-27

2014 Annual Conference  
Las Vegas, Nevada

2015 Annual Conference  
Seattle, Washington



## AJA Elects New Officers at Annual Conference

Judge Toni Higginbotham (pictured on the right above, with her mother, Mary Kathryn Manning) of the Louisiana Court of Appeal became AJA president on October 4, 2012, during the annual conference in New Orleans. Other officers are Judge Elliott Zide (Massachusetts), president-elect; Judge Brian MacKenzie (Michigan), vice president; Judge John Conery (Louisiana), secretary; and Judge Harold Froehlich (Wisconsin), treasurer. Judge Kevin Burke automatically became AJA's immediate past president.

## 2012 Awards Honor Judges, Lay Persons, and Journalists

AJA presented its 2012 awards at the annual awards luncheon in New Orleans on October 2. The *Chief Justice Richard W. Holmes Award of Merit*, given to a judge for outstanding contributions to the judiciary, was presented to William Dressel, president of the National Judicial College. Judge Kevin Burke, AJA's outgoing president, was given the *Judge William H. Burnett Award*, designated for an AJA member for outstanding service to the association. The *Judge Bob Jones Memorial Award*, which recognizes significant contributions to judicial education by a member of AJA, was presented to Judge Brian MacKenzie, chair of the AJA Education Committee for the last three years. Shelley Rockwell, AJA's association manager, received the *Glenn R. Winters Award*, which is given to a lay person who has made a substantial contribution toward improving the judiciary.



AJA's newest award for significant contributions for an effective judicial response to domestic violence was presented to Judge Elizabeth P. Hines. The award will now be known as the *Elizabeth Hines Domestic Violence Award*. Judge Hines presides over a specialized docket for domestic violence cases in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This docket is dedicated not only to protecting victims, but also to treating offenders to stop the cycle of domestic violence.

AJA also presented its *Third American Gavel Award for National Distinguished Reporting about the Judiciary* to [SCOTUSblog](#) at the annual conference in New Orleans. AJA created the award in 2009 to recognize the highest standards of reporting about courts and the justice system. "This award recognizes legal journalism at its best, and highlights the importance of journalism in educating the public about the legal system and the fundamental principles and values upon which that system is based," said AJA President Judge Kevin Burke.



SCOTUSblog is devoted to comprehensively covering the United States Supreme Court without

bias and according to the highest journalistic and legal ethical standards. Tom Goldstein and Amy Howe (pictured on the right above), husband and wife, are attorneys who practice before the Supreme Court and are intimately familiar with its operation. They founded the blog in 2002. Noted Supreme Court reporter Lyle Denniston joined a few years later. SCOTUSblog in the first decade of its existence has become the best continuing source of information about the decisions and operations of the Supreme Court.

## Newest White Paper Looks at Science Behind Decision Making

The neuroscience behind a judge's decisions is the topic of the American Judges Association's latest White Paper, "[Minding the Court: Enhancing the Decision-Making Process](#)," by Pamela Casey, Kevin Burke, and Steve Leben. This paper provides background on the science of decision making, looks at factors that can impair a judge's thought process (such as fatigue and multitasking), and suggests how judges can improve their decision-making process. This White Paper builds upon AJA's 2007 paper on procedural fairness.

## New Court-Funding-Related Publications Available Online

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) recently released a new paper and guide dedicated to presenting the case for adequate court funding to not only the executive and legislative branches, but also the public. In [Keeping Courts Funded: Recommendations on How Courts Can Avoid the Budget Axe](#), Greg Rowe, chief of the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office Legislation Unit, provides 16 suggestions on how judicial branch leaders should interact with members of the state executive and legislative branches over budget issues. This paper emerged from the Harvard University/NCSC [Executive Session on State Court Leadership in the 21st Century](#).

NCSC and Justice at Stake commissioned a nationwide opinion research project to understand how to better tell the story of the courts to the public, media, and legislators who shape court budgets. This project yielded [Funding Justice: Strategies and Messages for Restoring Court Funding](#). This guide contains important lessons about how people view the courts and their funding needs. It also includes a section on working with budget policy makers.



## 2013 Midyear Meeting

The 2013 midyear meeting will be held May 2-4 at the beautiful Wyndham Lake Buena Vista in Orlando, Florida. Complete information will be available on the AJA website in the next few months, but mark your calendars now for this great opportunity to learn more about AJA, attend a full day of education sessions on Friday, May 3, and enjoy all that Orlando has to offer.

**American Judges Association**

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