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Jury Summit 2001

The American Judges Association cosponsored *Jury Summit 2001*, which was held January 31 through February 3, 2001, in New York City. Four hundred judges, court administrators, and former jurors attended from 44 states, 20 federal courts, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and Japan. The New York State Unified Court System and the National Center for State Courts hosted the summit; cosponsoring with AJA were the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators, and the National Association for Court Management. The State Justice Institute and the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, provided substantial funding.

The summit provided an in-depth examination and discussion of current jury practices, experiences, and ideas; of new developments shown to contribute to the jury process; and of the newer ideas that are being developed and tried.

Specific topics addressed included creating a fair and democratic venire panel; selecting a fair jury; communicating with

jurors before, during, and after trial; ensuring jury privacy; writing instructions in plain English; and using innovative trial procedures, such as juror note-taking, jury questioning, and juror discussion of the evidence before submission. The format included plenary presentations for the whole group as well as smaller breakout groups with an opportunity for in-depth discussion.

New York City mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and CBS News anchor Dan Rather were featured as luncheon speakers. The attendees, who included AJA president Chris Williams and AJA immediate past president Gerald Elliott, were provided resource articles by judges and scholars on the main topics discussed. In addition, a resource room was provided with representatives of many jurisdictions who had samples of forms and procedures that have proven useful and valuable.

For those who didn't attend, *Jury Summit 2001* has a Web site at www.jurysummit.com. That site will continue in the future, providing forums for discussion of jury-related issues, state jury Web sites, jury research, and links to helpful and related sites and materials. ■

AJA Focused on Service, Membership, and Communications

The American Judges Association's Executive Committee held a two-day meeting in January. Among wide-ranging discussions, the topics of improving service to members, increasing communication to and among members, and increasing AJA membership were recurring themes.

An initial report was received on the AJA's "best practices" project, in which AJA committees were asked to designate programs or procedures that appeared to be among the best practices in an area. The AJA's efforts in this area are themselves designed to assist the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), which has begun a process to identify such programs. AJA has forwarded to CCJ the report of AJA's Domestic Violence Committee, which provided an excellent

summary of some promising practices for consideration. Reports of such practices to the AJA membership can be anticipated later this year.

The AJA has initiated an e-mail listserve, allowing AJA to keep members apprised of coming events and information. AJA members who provide e-mail addresses with their membership registration are automatically added to the listserve.

AJA president Chris Williams also has designated member recruitment and retention as key goals for the coming year. Ideas to accomplish those goals were discussed and will be the subject of further discussion at the AJA Midyear Meeting in March. AJA is governed by a Board of Governors, which meets twice a year at the midyear and annual meetings. The AJA Executive Committee oversees AJA operations in-between those meetings. ■