

# President's Column

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## 2023 – THE YEAR OF EXCELLENCE!

Greetings my Esteemed Colleagues and *Court Review* Readers,

These last few months have been ones of reflection, gratitude, thankfulness, and foresight. As we reflect on 2022 and examine our goals and objectives, we can proudly say that the American Judges Association has indeed progressed and emerged from the uncharted path of the pandemic stronger—and better equipped to serve our members. We have embraced technology and will keep it at the forefront of all that we do as it serves as the force that keeps us moving forward. Our membership has grown, our committees are working, and our conferences were outstanding. I am grateful to all who have partnered with me, and worked alongside me to contribute to this legacy of excellence by participating, voicing their opinions and ideas, and helping to assure the American Judges Association remains the preeminent “Judges only” organization. It is my high honor to have been elected to serve a second term as president of this remarkable Association. We have been tirelessly laboring to continue the work we started last term. I am overjoyed to have been afforded the opportunity to usher many of the projects we started during the last term to fruition. Thank you, American Judges Association, for placing your trust in me to lead this association for another year.

We look back so that we can move forward! 2022 has brought many challenges to all of us as we adjust to living in a COVID world. Leading in a COVID world is bittersweet and, therefore, can at times be very difficult and challenging. The world has changed in many ways and in order to remain relevant, the American Judges Association has had to make some fundamental changes. Change, though it can be challenging also can provide an opportunity to grow. Our members have stepped up and not only faced the challenges but have overcome them. I am grateful that we have continued to grow and become stronger.

In 2023 we swiftly hit the ground moving as we are preparing for our midyear conference. I invite you to join us in person April 13-15, 2023 in beautiful San Antonio, Texas—one of the fastest growing and most diverse cities in the United States. It is known as the Alamo City and for its beautiful Riverwalk. Our theme for the conference, “Creating a Culture of Inclusion to Maximize Courts’ Potential,” could not be more relevant, nor timely. One of the American Judges Association’s prime objectives is educating judges to ensure that our members and their courts are the best they can be. We should enhance our courts’ potential at every opportunity. After all, aren’t we all striving to live up to the creed of our forefathers: “One Nation, under God, and Justice for All?” Join us as we dive into the issues surrounding inclusion and its value to our courts. A huge thank you to Texas Chief Justice Nathan Hecht, Conference Chair Chief Justice Rebecca Martinez, the Texas justices and judges, and the entire San Antonio Plan-

ning and Education Committees for their stellar work in assuring that this conference in the Alamo City will be astounding. If you have not yet registered, please do so immediately—you won’t want to miss this excellent educational and social programming. We hope to see you there!

Our plans for our annual conference in beautiful Hawaii are complete! The Hawaii conference committee has been hard at work to make sure that this annual conference will be the best one ever. The dates are September 9-14, 2023 in Honolulu. Our theme for this conference is “Innovative Courts for a Modern Judiciary.” Registration is now open. Please check our website for the conference schedule and other details. Mahalo!

On December 27, 2022, I extended greetings on behalf of the American Judges Association at the National Bar Association Judicial Council’s Kwanzaa Celebration, where three of our members who have retired were honored. Congratulations to Judges Denise Langford Morris, Randa Trapp, and Monte Watkins on the occasion of their retirement. All are stellar jurists and worthy of such an honor!

On January 12, 2023 I traveled to Dubai as part of the National Bar Association Judicial Council’s mid-winter delegation where I served as moderator of the Judicial Ethics panel and also delivered the Invocation at the Convocation celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This experience was incredible! Thank you Chair Judge Kimberly M. Esmond Adams for allowing me the opportunity to highlight the American Judges Association to the Dubai delegation, some of which are joint members of the National Bar Association and the American Judges Association. I am proud of our partnership with the National Bar Association Judicial Council, joining hands to educate our judges, and most importantly working together to march towards justice and equality for all!

If the American Judges Association intends to continue to thrive, we must evolve as the world evolves and our courts must stay current and evolve also. A feat that can only be accomplished together. I stand upon the shoulders of 59 other American Judges Association presidents. Their unwavering commitment to the American Judges Association drives my unwavering commitment as well. Commitment to an organization, whose mission is to promote and improve the effective administration of justice, maintain the status and independence of the judiciary by acting to assure that courts always provide due process, and help ensure courts are fair, just, and accessible to all. If you enjoy the benefits and camaraderie of this outstanding organization, let it be known. Share its values of membership with your colleagues. Please don’t keep it a secret! Be an ambassador for the association. Tell any judge you come in contact with about the benefits of being an AJA member. There is strength in numbers! In our roles as judges we must embrace that we are here to serve and to lead in 2023—The Year of Excellence!

