

President's Column

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2023 – THE YEAR OF EXCELLENCE!

To my esteemed colleagues & court review readers,

I am ecstatic to report that the American Judges Association's future looks bright! Our membership is growing, our committees are active, and our midyear conference in San Antonio, Texas was amazing! Our midyear educational seminars were scholarly and enlightening. Kudos to our Conference Chair, Chief Justice Rebecca Martinez and our Education Chair, Chief Justice Robert Torres for bringing forth a phenomenal conference. The theme of our Midyear conference was "Creating a Culture of Inclusion, Maximizing the Court's Potential." The idea of experiencing things as others do or learning about them is embracing diversity. Each of us has different life experiences that impact who we become. These life experiences shape one's core values and beliefs. Our court's potential is maximized when we understand and embrace diversity in all aspects of our courts. Our Texas Judges rolled out the red carpet for us! If you were not in San Antonio you missed an intellectually stimulating and life enlightening experience.

Now we are eager to get to Honolulu, Hawaii for our 62nd Annual Conference September 9-14, 2023 where our conference theme is "Innovative Courts for a Modern Judiciary." As we continue our "new life" with COVID and the changes it has brought, it is imperative that we become tech savvy or something very close to it. That is why we have chosen to focus on innovative courts at our Annual Conference. As we learn to navigate these innovative waters, we must embrace all that is new and different. Our educational sessions will include topics such as "Posting can be Perilous for Judges: Be Nice"; "Technology-Based Solutions and other Tools for Improving Access to Justice and Linking Litigants to Service"; "Tech Talk with the Chiefs"; "Web 3.0 and Meta-verse" and much more. The conference promises to be astoundingly impressive. Registration is now open. Don't hesitate! We expect registration to reach capacity very quickly.

The American Judges Association is proud to showcase our inspiring and enlightening conferences because we are convinced that educating our judiciary by providing cutting-edge educational sessions enhances the judiciary, and our ability to perform and carry out our duties and responsibilities. We are also convinced of the importance of professionalism and collegiality in our profession. There is no substitute for seeing and talking to colleagues face to face, in the same room. Both of these goals are met at our conferences. Every conference has had an access to justice component because we understand the critical importance of access to justice for all citizens. Mapping the future of justice means we have to assure access to justice to

everyone regardless of race, color, creed, or sexual orientation, and understand the importance of inclusiveness.

The American Judges Association has shown its resilience by the amazing work our members have been doing in this post COVID or eternally COVID era. Our members embrace the idea that in our profession we are not just robe-wearing individuals, but that we are tasked with making a difference in the communities in which we serve. With the privilege of wearing the robe comes the responsibility and obligation to serve; the responsibility to inspire and change lives; the responsibility to be a servant leader! I believe that meaningful change happens with inspired people who love what they are doing. But most people are afraid of change and afraid to step out of our comfort zone to create it.

Our members are not only willing to step out but embrace the opportunity. These are certainly crisis times. It is in the time of crisis that separates the men from the boys and the women from the girls. We are definitely fighting to win the war for Justice.

Justice is served when our system of justice functions fairly and protects the constitutional rights of all people, not just some people but ALL people! My vision for the American Judges Association has always been to build a more diverse and inclusive organization. Diversity is what makes the

American Judges Association great. Not just diversity in the traditional sense, but also in the sense of different ideologies and thoughts. We are not all the same, nor are we expected to all be the same. What is expected is for us all to work together for a common goal—Equal Justice under the Law.

As I struggle to watch where America has landed today, I also smile because I know that with the help of organizations like the American Judges Association, whose sole premise is based on the truth that we are better together, we will soon realize that there is more that joins us than that separates us. This great country is great because of the people that live in it. Where there is life, there is hope! Democracy is at the forefront of our being. We must forever uphold the creed of our forefathers "One Nation under God with Liberty and Justice for All."

Let me assure you that my number one goal has been and will always be to continue to strive to make this the best association I can, an association that continues to evolve as our profession evolves, an organization of which you can truly be proud to be a part, an organization that works to ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice and the independency of the judiciary. With your help, I know these goals will be the pillar upon which our organization will stand. I am thankful and honored to serve as your President. My best to each of you, my colleagues and friends of the American Judges Association.

