

Great Things Judges Have Done in 2021

Survey link: <https://forms.gle/Gtw3GUpWTy7scNqz5>

Great Fun

1. “Winners announced for Maryland Judiciary's 15th Annual Conflict Resolution Day Bookmark Art Contest”
Maryland Courts, February 8, 2021
<https://mdcourts.gov/media/news/2021/pr20210208>
Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Mary E. Barbera announced the winners of The Maryland Judiciary’s 15th annual bookmark art contest. The contest, which is facilitated by the Maryland Judiciary’s Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office, asks students grades K-8 to design bookmarks that display peaceful conflict resolution. Chief Judge Barbera, herself a former early-education teacher in Baltimore City public schools, spoke highly of the contestants, saying, “The creativity and artwork of Maryland’s schoolchildren is inspiring, especially during this year of virtual learning at home. It shows the resilience and positive focus of our children and young people during these challenging times.”
2. “Lawyer Turns on Zoom Filter by Mistake - Has to Tell Judge He's Not a Cat”
Sky News, February 10, 2021
<https://news.sky.com/story/im-here-live-judge-im-not-a-cat-lawyers-virtual-court-case-feline-filter-faux-pas-12213752>
Judge Roy Ferguson of Texas’ 394th District Court met with a furry surprise during a virtual court hearing in February. Lawyer Rod Ponton unknowingly joined the hearing with a cat filter equipped on his Zoom camera. Ponton, who later claimed one of his children must have equipped the filter, told Judge Ferguson "Can you hear me? I'm here live. I'm not a cat." Judge Ferguson, instead of laughing at Ponton, made the experience into a teachable moment. Judge Ferguson later tweeted, “If a child used your computer, before you join a virtual hearing check the Zoom Video Options to be sure filters are off,” and went on to say, “It is crucial to me that this not be couched as poking fun at or belittling the lawyer, but noting that it goes hand-in-hand with the legal community's effort to continue representing their clients in these challenging times, and at the incredible professionalism and dignity displayed by all involved.”
3. “Family Court Judge Warns Attorney to Wear Pants in Hilarious Parody Video”
Joe Patrice, Above the Law, February 11, 2021
<https://abovethelaw.com/2021/02/family-court-judge-warns-attorneys-to-wear-pants-in-hilarious-parody-video/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUIR8hX9wPg&feature=youtu.beC>
Associate Judge Andrew Ten Eyck of Dallas’s 301st District Court appeared in a parody music video that spoofed the song “You’ll be Back” from the Broadway musical “Hamilton.” Judge Ten Eyck, who sported a crown and red velvet robe to mimic King George III, poked fun at Zoom proceedings by reminding lawyers to wear pants while court was in session.

4. “Delaware Judge Pitches in For Epic Rap Video”
Joe Patrice, Above the Law, February 12, 2021
<https://abovethelaw.com/2021/02/delaware-judges-pitch-in-for-epic-music-video/>
Delaware Family Court Judge James McGiffin Jr. recruited fellow Delaware judges and lawyers to participate in a music video about coping with COVID. The video, which was made in collaboration with the “Official Musical Theater Group of the Delaware Legal Community” Profound Bono, features cameos from several singing and dancing judges. The video, while humorous, encourages the Delaware legal community to remain optimistic during the pandemic.

5. “Nailed It! Judges Have Fun with Fondant and Frosting”
State of Florida Twelfth Judicial Circuit, February 22, 2021
<https://jud12.flcourts.org/news/Details/1902>
Eight Florida judges competed in a virtual cake decorating contest hosted by the Sarasota County Bar Association in February. The judges, who were paired into teams of two, adorned their cakes with gavels, law books, and the scales of justice. Morgan Bentley, past president of the Sarasota County Bar Association, moderated the event and read a list of fun facts about the competitors while they were busy decorating. The winners, by unanimous decision, were Sarasota County Judges Phyllis Galen and Dana Moss.

6. “Judge Leaves a Lasting Impression on Championship-Caliber Girl’s Flag Football Team”
Jim Ash, Florida Bar News, May 14, 2021
<https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/judge-leaves-a-lasting-impression-on-championship-caliber-girls-flag-football-team/>
For the past ten years, Florida’s 13th Judicial Circuit Judge Greg Green has served as the assistant head coach and defensive coordinator for the girl’s flag football team at Tampa’s Robinson High School. Judge Green helped coach the team to a perfect 22-0 record in their 2021 season, earning the team a sixth state championship title. On describing his coaching, Judge Green said, “It’s very similar to the way I run my courtroom. We always tell them, rules are important. If we follow the rules, we get rewarded.”

7. “Judge Goes for the Gold and Gets It”
Kathy Laird, Crawford County Now, June 22, 2021
<https://crawfordcountynow.com/local/judge-goes-for-the-gold-and-gets-it/>
Crawford County Common Pleas Court Judge Sean Leuthold represented Crawford County in the Ohio Police and Fire Games hosted in Canton, Ohio. Judge Leuthold, a long-time weightlifter, participated in a total of 3 competitions— two for bench pressing and one for curling. Judge Leuthold took gold in all three categories, benching 350 lbs. and curling 145 lbs.

Great Inclusion

1. “Judges Focus on Diversity in Clerkship, Internship Hiring”

U.S. Courts, April 29, 2021

https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/04/29/judges-focus-diversity-clerkship-internship-hiring?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=usc-news

Federal judges from across the United States are working to make law clerkships and judicial internships more accessible to a diverse pool of law students. Some judges have opted to participate in the Judiciary's Federal Law Clerk Hiring Pilot Plan, an initiative that ensures all judges receive applications on the same day and gives them a 24-hour window to review applications before beginning the interview process. Some Judges are also participating in the "Share the Wealth Clerkship Program," a program designed to help judges attract diverse candidates for internships. Judge Raymond A. Jackson of the Eastern District of Virginia summarized the necessity of a diverse judiciary by saying, "Working with people of different life experiences better shapes our understanding of the unique circumstances facing the many different people that appear before the court."

2. "Chief Justice Newby Announces Task Force on ACEs-Informed Courts"

North Carolina Judicial Branch, May 18, 2021

<https://www.nccourts.gov/news/tag/press-release/chief-justice-newby-announces-task-force-on-aces-informed-courts>

The Chief Justice of North Carolina, Paul Newby, announced a task force on ACEs-Informed Courts. This task force hopes to better understand and educate those who work in the justice system about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). In addition, they want to help the community by developing strategies for addressing adverse consequences within the court system. They hope to achieve this goal through education for judges and court administrators, designing programs that help offenders and victims create better lives for themselves, and provide a platform of collaboration between court officials and educators.

3. "'It is Inadequate:' Delaware Launches New Effort to Diversify Judges and Lawyers"

Mark Eichmann, WHYY, May 20, 2021

<https://whyy.org/articles/it-is-inadequate-delaware-launches-new-effort-to-diversify-judges-and-lawyers/>

Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz Jr. and Associate Justice Tamika R. Montgomery-Reeves of the Delaware Supreme Court collaborated to lead The Delaware Bench and Bar Diversity Project. The project features a committee whose members include representatives from various federal and state departments, universities, and nonprofit legal aid groups. The committee will conduct a study on racial disparities within Delaware's courts and issue recommendations by the end of 2021. Both Justices hope the program will serve as a model for other states, with Justice Montgomery-Reeves saying "Success, in my view, looks like a bench that is more representative of the community that we serve."

4. "Judge Nelson Honored with National Equity Award"

Oregon Courts, May 26, 2021

[https://www.courts.oregon.gov/news/Lists/ArticleNews/Attachments/1481/7773c6ca8719414ba4dbf3ec905ef54b-05.26.2021_EQUITY_ACHIEVEMENT_AWARD_PRESS_RELEASE_\(FInal\)NelsonOJD.pdf](https://www.courts.oregon.gov/news/Lists/ArticleNews/Attachments/1481/7773c6ca8719414ba4dbf3ec905ef54b-05.26.2021_EQUITY_ACHIEVEMENT_AWARD_PRESS_RELEASE_(FInal)NelsonOJD.pdf)

The National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts presented Oregon Supreme Court Justice Adrienne Nelson and District of Columbia Superior Court Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo the Equity Achievement Award. Both awardees were recognized for their leadership roles in eliminating structural barriers to the courts and working to improve procedural fairness for historically marginalized constituencies, including people of color. Justice Nelson has led efforts to educate judges, lawyers, court staff, and jurors about racial disparities in Oregon law and the impact of implicit bias on judging. Judge Puig-Lugo has been an advocate for LGBTQ+ youth in child welfare and judicial delinquency programs in addition to spearheading efforts for a more diverse judiciary.

5. “Meet the Federal Judge Who Is Championing Diversity in the Zantac MDL”
Michael Mora, Daily Business Review, May 28, 2021
<https://www.law.com/dailybusinessreview/2021/05/28/meet-the-federal-judge-who-is-championing-diversity-in-the-zantac-mdl/>
Judge Robin L. Rosenberg of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida placed an emphasis on appointing women and minorities to lead counsel positions in the ongoing Zantac liability multidistrict litigation case. In May, Judge Rosenberg selected 24 lawyers to lead litigation, 13 of which are women. Judge Rosenberg encouraged other judges to think about how they could diversify leadership roles in multidistrict litigation cases so that “you can have younger, less experienced lawyers with more diverse backgrounds.”
6. “I am American’: South Bay judges star in rare video in honor of AAPI Heritage Month”
David Louie, ABC 7 News, May 31, 2021
<https://abc7news.com/santa-clara-judges-aapi-video-heritage-month-stop-asian-hate-ant/10725865/>
Thirteen Asian American or Pacific Islander judges at the Santa Clara Superior Court participated in a video in honor of AAPI Heritage Month. This video full of usually camera shy judges wants to show how diversity and inclusion can help bring about equal justice by starting important community conversations. In the video, judges share their personal stories about discrimination that they have faced and what it is like growing up as members of immigrant families.
7. “Two Franklin County Jurists Among the Founders of Ohio Black Judges Association”
John Fuddy, The Columbus Dispatch, June 11, 2021
<https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/courts/2021/06/08/just-56-black-judges-ohio-new-group-wants-see-numbers-grow/524936601>
Ohio judges Emanuella Groves of the 8th District Court of Appeals and Cassandra Collier-Williams of the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas are the founding members of the Ohio Black Judges Association, Inc. The organization, which was established in January 2021, seeks to address the lack of diversity within Ohio’s judiciary and adjacent legal professions, including law and policing. The organization serves as a

resource for Black judges who wish to continue their legal education and enlists current Black judges across Ohio to serve as mentors for aspiring Black judges and lawyers.

8. “Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Department of Human Services Address Criminal Justice Reform for Pennsylvanians with Autism”

Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, June 17, 2021

<https://www.pacourts.us/Storage/media/pdfs/20210617/150057-pennsylvaniasupremecourt,departmentofhumanservicesaddresscriminaljusticereformforpennsylvanianswithautism.pdf>

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court and Department of Human Services hosted a discussion, the last of a five-part regional series, aimed at better understanding the experience of those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in western Pennsylvania’s court system. The Court listened to medical professionals, medical service providers, and individuals with ASD discuss the various challenges associated with providing justice for those with ASD. Justice Kevin Dougherty spoke highly of the court’s efforts to reach out to those with ASD, saying, “Early on, we said we were committed to reforming our system, to broadening our vision and opening ourselves up to someone else’s reality – especially when it looks different than our own. Hearing the stories and learning about the lives lived and lessons learned from our friends and neighbors with autism has only increased our resolve to make lasting and positive change.”

9. “Michigan’s Chief Justice: Carl Nassib is my Cousin, ‘and My Heart is Full’”

Paul Egan, Detroit Free Press, June 25, 2021

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2021/06/25/carl-nassib-bridget-mccormack-michigan-supreme-court/5343551001/>

Michigan Chief Justice Bridget McCormack took to Twitter to congratulate her brother, Will McCormack, for his Oscar-winning role as co-director of the animated short “If Anything Happens I Love You” in April. McCormack also used her Twitter to express love and support for her cousin and Las Vegas Raiders defensive end Carl Nassib. Nassib, who came out as gay via an Instagram post in June, is the first openly-gay active NFL player.

10. “Biden nominates first LGBT woman to federal circuit court”

Aamer Madhani, AP News, September 14, 2021

<https://apnews.com/article/lifestyle-joe-biden-courts-def681152d4698620166ed64e567acaf>

The White House announced that President Joe Biden nominated Judge Beth Robinson to serve on the 2nd Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals. Robinson is an associate justice on the Vermont Supreme Court and is well known for her involvement in establishing Vermont’s civil union law, the first legal recognition of a same-sex relationship in the

US. If her nomination goes through, Robinson would be the first LGBTQ+ woman to serve on a federal circuit court.

11. “‘Take My Spot:’ Ex-Judges Call Out Scarcity of Latinx Jurists in Georgia Ahead of Hispanic Heritage Month”

Cedra Mayfield, Daily Report Online, September 15, 2021

<https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/2021/09/15/take-my-spot-ex-judges-call-out-scarcity-of-latinx-jurists-in-georgia-ahead-of-hispanic-heritage-month/>

In the wake of Hispanic Heritage Month, Judge Dax Lopez of the DeKalb County State Court urged Georgia Governor Brian Kemp to replace him with another Hispanic judge upon his retirement from the bench in September. Judge Lopez accredits his own appointment to the bench to the advocacy of now retired Hispanic Judge J. Antonio DelCampo, Georgia’s first Latino trial judge. Both Lopez and DelCampo emphasized the necessity of judicial diversity and expressed disappointment with Georgia’s current lack of Hispanic representation in the judiciary. DelCampo summarized his desire for diverse judges by stating, “I think if you get more diverse, you get better decisions as a whole.”

12. “National Association of Women Judges Celebrates Anniversary of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment with Nashville Conference”

Tennessee State Courts, October 13, 2021

<https://www.tncourts.gov/press/2021/10/13/national-association-women-judges-celebrates-anniversary-ratification-19th>

U.S. District Court Judge Waverly Crenshaw welcomed female judges from across the United States to celebrate the 43rd Annual National Association of Women Judges Conference. Tennessee Chief Justice Roger Page spoke of suffragettes’ historically important role and recognized “the important duty that society imposes on us to lead in advancing diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in law.” Judges from around the country hosted talks on a variety of subjects, including access to justice for LGBTQ+ youth, developing court programs for individualized opioid addiction and recovery services, and several sessions on women’s voting rights.

13. “Attorney Tana Lin is Now the First Asian American Judge in Washington State”

Associated Press, October 22, 2021

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/attorney-tana-lin-now-first-asian-american-us-judge-washington-state-rcna3591>

Tana Lin, who formerly served as the president of the board of the American Civil Liberties Union for Washington State, will be the first Asian American to serve as a federal judge in Washington State. Lin’s confirmation comes amidst a push from President Joe Biden to diversify the judiciary, expressing a desire to have more professional and demographic diversity in the federal courts.

14. “Senate Confirms First Lesbian Judge to a Federal Appeals Court”

Dan Avery, NBC, November 2, 2021

<https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/senate-confirms-first-lesbian-judge-federal-appeals-court-rcna4355>

Vermont Supreme Court Justice Beth Robinson was confirmed to the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on November 1st, making her the first openly gay woman to serve on any federal circuit court. Justice Robinson previously represented LGBTQ clients in several civil rights cases as a litigator and chaired Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force. Democratic senator from Vermont Patrick Leahy described Justice Robinson’s work as “[changing] the trajectory of LGBTQ rights in this country,” and “[leading] our nation toward justice.”

Great Inspiration

1. “Judge returns to bench after son's murder: 'I will not be frightened or be afraid to do what I love to do'”

Katie Kindelan, ABC 7 News, March 2, 2021

<https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/News/judge-returns-bench-sons-murder-frightened-afraid-love/story?id=76200104>

U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas returned to the bench after her family was attacked last summer, resulting in the death of her son, Daniel. Salas was targeted at her home because of her job as a judge and her ethnicity. Salas returns to the court saying, “I know Daniel would want me to come back and I know that Daniel would want me to represent all women and Latinas everywhere and come back and show that I am not deterred, and I will not be frightened or be afraid to do what I love to do, which is be a United States district court judge”. She has also used this tragic experience to enact change by helping pass “Daniel’s Law” in New Jersey. Gov. Phil Murphy signed this legislation in November, and it protects the home addresses and contact information of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials from the public.

2. “Single Mom Makes the Most of Drug Court’s Second chance”

Csaba Sukosd, Court News Ohio, March 12, 2021

http://www.courtnewsOhio.gov/bench/2021/LorainCoDrugCourt_031221.asp#.YVOjZWZKg6E

Lorain County Domestic Relations Judge Sherry Glass, along with the Lorain County Family Drug Court, hosted a virtual graduation ceremony for a woman who completed the court’s drug rehabilitation program. The woman, a mother who goes only by Dixie, previously struggled with substance abuse but was able to recover with the help of Lorain County’s residential project for homeless women, among other county services. Judge

Glass addressed Dixie by saying, “This is one tough fight. You have been fighting every day for your life, your happiness, and your child. You did it.”

3. “A judge gave a drug dealer a second chance. Sixteen years later, he swore him in as a lawyer”

Kim Bellware, The Washington Post, May 25, 2021

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/05/25/edward-martell-lawyer-judge-bruce-morrow/>

On May 14, Edward Martell was sworn in as a member of the State Bar of Michigan by Judge Bruce Morrow of Wayne County. The two had met before in 2005 when Morrow had given Martell a second chance despite his lengthy criminal record and encouraged him to make something more of his life. Morrow saw a "young man who had rebounded from setbacks” and wanted Martell to push forward to see what he could achieve. The two would keep in touch throughout Martell’s journey back to school and into the legal field.

4. “Chief Justice Talks Empowerment at Cleveland Private Girls’ School”

Anne Yeager, Court News Ohio, May 26, 2021

https://courtnewsOhio.gov/bench/2021/LaurelSchoolVisit_052621.asp#.YU4lbWZKg6E

Ohio Supreme Court Justice Maureen O’Connor spoke to over 100 students at the Laurel School for Girls in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Student Class Vice President Madeline Friedman invited Chief Justice O’Connor to speak as a part of the school’s ongoing speaker series. Chief Justice O’Connor spoke about her experiences being a woman in the judiciary and encouraged her audience to succeed in the face of opposition. Student Rida Tahir remarked the impact Chief Justice O’Connor’s speech had on her, saying “Her speech made me understand that no matter your gender or race, you can still achieve your dreams if you keep pushing and working hard.”

5. “Add ‘superhero’ to Judge Rosie’s Title”

Nancy Preyor-Johnson, San Antonio Express News, June 21, 2021

<https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/article/Preyor-Johnson-Judge-Rosie-Speedlin-16255381.php>

Judge Rosie Speedlin Gonzalez became the first openly gay Latina judge elected in Bexar County, Texas. Judge Speedlin Gonzalez celebrated the beginning of Pride Month with a Facebook post of her in her judge’s robe along with the caption, “Gay. Flawless. Proud. Happy. She/Her/Ella.” Judge Speedlin Gonzalez’s sexuality has been the subject of controversy, however. She was sanctioned twice over her decision to hang a rainbow flag in her courtroom. Despite these controversies, however, Judge Speedlin Gonzalez has remained true to herself, saying, “I am who I am. I don’t hide it.” Judge Speedlin

Gonzalez, in recognition of her resilience, received the Texas Diversity Council LGBTQ+ Leadership Award.

6. “A Judge’s Mind and a Hero’s Heart”

David Lat, Above the Law, June 22, 2021

<https://abovethelaw.com/2021/06/a-judges-mind-and-a-heros-heart/>

Judge Robert Bell of the Oklahoma Court of Civic Appeals was dining out with his family when an elderly diner began choking. Bell, who received lifeguard training in 1987 while in college, successfully performed the Heimlich maneuver, saving the diner’s life.

7. “Judges Welcome New Americans at Wrigley Field”

U.S. Courts, July 8, 2021

<https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/07/08/judges-welcome-new-americans-wrigley-field>

Judges John Z. Lee and Rebecca R. Pallmeyer of the Northern District of Illinois presided over a naturalization ceremony held at Chicago’s Wrigley Field over Independence Day weekend. The judges welcomed 172 immigrants from over 45 countries with Judge Lee, who is himself a naturalized citizen from Korea, administering the Oath of Allegiance. In a court release, Judge Pallmeyer said “We are thrilled to conduct this ceremony here, where we can extend a warm, friendly, and deeply sincere congratulations to 172 newcomers, who will celebrate Independence Day with us for the first time as U.S. citizens, and work with all of us to form a more perfect union.”

8. “Springfield Armory Hosts Naturalization Ceremony”

Elizabeth Román, MassLive, September 17, 2021

https://www.masslive.com/news/2021/09/springfield-armory-hosts-naturalization-ceremony-photos.html?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=masslivenews_sf

Judge Katherine Robertson of the Massachusetts District Court presided over a naturalization ceremony on Citizenship Day at the Springfield Armory National Historic Site. Judge Robertson addressed the 24 new United States citizens from 16 different countries, saying “We truly welcome you. We want you here, we need you as new citizens. You belong here,” and “We value the contributions you’ve already made as residents of this country, and we value the contributions you will make as American citizens.”

9. “Miami Hosts Naturalization Ceremony at Hamilton Campus”

Henri Robins, The Miami Student, September 20, 2021

https://www.miamistudent.net/article/2021/09/naturalization-ceremony?ct=content_open&cv=cbox_featured

Magistrate Judge Stephanie K. Bowman of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio naturalized almost 70 new U.S. citizens on Citizenship Day. Judge Bowman described the ceremony, which was held at the Miami University's Hamilton Campus, as "one of the few happy moments that happens in courts." Judge Bowman reflected on the experiences of the newly naturalized U.S. citizens, some of whom having traveled thousands of miles to escape political turmoil and poor economic conditions, saying "To see how much it means to them to become a United States citizen, it's a pretty special feeling to be able to share on that day with them."

10. "Judge Beverly Martin Tells Why She's Leaving the 11th Circuit"

Katherine Hayes Tucker, Daily Report, May 20, 2021

<https://www.law.com/dailyreportonline/2021/05/20/judge-beverly-martin-tells-why-shes-leaving-the-11th-circuit/>

"Judge Beverly Martin to Join Center on Civil Justice as Executive Director"

NYU Law News, October 4, 2021

<https://www.law.nyu.edu/news/judge-beverly-martin-joins-center-civil-justice>

Judge Beverly Martin of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit retired from the bench in September in hopes of helping those "whose suffering [she] was not able to address as a judge." In October, Judge Martin announced her new role as executive director of NYU Law's Center on Civil Justice (CCJ), a development professor Samuel Issacharoff considers "a great stroke of fortune for NYU." The CCJ draws on the expertise of NYU Law faculty as well as leading practitioners and judges to identify legal problems most deserving of further investigation and engagement, attempting to close the gap between scholarly and policy analysis.

11. "Judge Julia Gibbons Receives 2021 Devitt Award"

U.S. Courts, October 7, 2021

https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/10/07/judge-julia-gibbons-receives-2021-devitt-award?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=usc-news

Judge Julia Smith Gibbons of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit was awarded the 2021 Edward J. Devitt Distinguished Service to Justice Award. The award honors Article III judges with distinguished judicial careers and a demonstrated commitment to the administration of justice. Judge Gibbons, who is described as being both a trailblazer and role model in the legal profession, was the first female trial judge in Tennessee, the youngest U.S. district court judge in the country, and chair of both the U.S. Judicial Conference's Budget Committee and the Judicial Resources Committee. Upon receiving her reward, Gibbons remarked, "Serving with federal judicial colleagues and staff for the past 38 years, as we have conducted trials, decided cases, and done the

work of judiciary governance, has given me great faith in the federal courts as an institution.”

12. “Louisiana Judge to Receive William H. Rehnquist Reward for Judicial Excellence”

Louisiana Courts, October 12, 2021

https://www.lasc.org/Press_Release?p=2021-29

Louisiana District Court Judge Scott U. Schlegel received the National Center for State Courts’ 26th Annual William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, making him the first Louisiana Judge to receive the award. The award, which is given to a state court judge who demonstrates qualities of judicial excellence, was given in recognition of Judge Schlegel’s early and extensive use of technology to improve accessibility and efficiency in the courtroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his nomination of Judge Schlegel, Louisiana Chief Judge John Weimer said, “By allowing court users greater and more convenient access to the courts; in providing resources to lawyers and litigants; in offering alternative, more efficient ways to navigate the court process, Judge Schlegel is leading positive and technologically supported changes within the Louisiana system of justice.”

13. “A Judge Challenged a Man in his Court to a Game of Chess, and Helped Change a Life in the Process”

Robert Chappell, Madison 365, October 20, 2021

<https://madison365.com/a-judge-challenged-a-man-in-his-court-to-a-game-of-chess-and-helped-change-a-life-in-the-process/?fbclid=IwAR0iCEX6LVLY5OPWBaArCYEUobNHve66BN-WcQMh9S9dBSwaW3g72FXPf3Q>

Wisconsin Judge Everett Mitchell of Dane County’s high-risk drug court went viral after posting a photo of him playing chess with drug court participant Charles Green with the caption, “He won the game. I won his respect.” Judge Mitchell says he approaches his defendants as individuals, saying “I try to find something that each person has a unique thing about, whether it is their art or their children, or chess, or reading books, or putting together puzzles.” Judge Mitchell says drug court represents a necessary shift from punitive to rehabilitative justice, saying “It is recognizing that people have a sickness, and we just need to make sure that we’re responding to the sickness and not just treat them as straight criminals.”

14. “Ohio Vietnam Veteran Judge Featured on PBS”

Csaba Sukosd, Ohio Court News, October 22, 2021

http://www.courtnewsOhio.gov/bench/2021/veteranJudge_102221.asp#.YXXSWRDMI6E

Retired Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Michael Jackson will be featured in PBS's new series, "The American Veteran." Jackson, who was awarded four medals of valor and a purple heart during his service as a Marine in the Vietnam War, transitioned to the legal profession after his service and started the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Veterans Treatment Court in 2012. "My hope is that veterans – in and out of treatments courts – watch this series to spark conversation and reflection toward healing their trauma," Judge Jackson said.

Great Integrity

1. "Colorado Chief Justice Boatright Emphasizes Accountability and Culture Change in first State of the Judiciary Speech"
Colorado Judicial Branch, February 18, 2021
<https://www.courts.state.co.us/Media/release.cfm?id=1963>
Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Brian D. Boatright emphasized his commitment to correcting past instances of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in Colorado's judiciary. This came in the wake of an earlier announcement in which the court requested that independent state agencies conduct external investigations of alleged misconduct within the judicial branch and provide recommendations for improvement. Chief Justice Boatright reiterated his commitment by saying, "Where there is wrongdoing, we will address it. Where there was an abuse of power, we will stop it. Where our policies are deficient, we will change them. We want to know the truth. We recognize the branch faces a crisis of confidence in its leadership."
2. "Federal Judge Orders Associates Not to Work Over The Holidays"
Kathryn Rubino, Above the Law, September 9, 2021
<https://abovethelaw.com/2021/09/federal-judge-orders-associates-not-to-work-over-the-holidays/>
Judge Charles Breyer of United States District Court for the Northern District of California pushed up the deadline in an ongoing case from January 14th to December 10th so as to not "ruin a lot of Christmas vacations for a lot of people." Judge Breyer went on to order plaintiff attorneys not to assign associates work over the holidays, saying, "Partners, you spend your lives as you wish, but associates who must take your direction and must please you and must obey your directions, they're at your bidding. Well, not for the week of Dec. 19 through Dec. 26 in this litigation."
3. "What is Impartiality? Judges Explain How They Apply the Law"
U.S. Courts, September 14, 2021
<https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/09/14/what-judicial-impartiality-judges-explain-how-they-apply-law>

Ten federal judges appeared in the video “Court Shorts: A Fair and Impartial Judiciary” to discuss their commitment to impartiality, the Constitution, and the rule of law. The video, which was produced in celebration of Constitution Day, features the judges answering six questions pertaining to the maintenance of impartial judicial procedures and the importance of judicial impartiality on everyday life and American democracy writ large. Judge Randolph Moss underscores this importance by claiming judicial impartiality is what ultimately protects democracy and every citizen in the United States.

4. “‘You’ve Disgraced This Country:’ Judge Rips Capitol Riot Defendant”

Josh Gerstein and Kyle Cheney, Politico, September 24, 2021

<https://www.politico.com/news/2021/09/24/judge-rips-capitol-riot-defendant-514136>

Judge Reggie B. Walton of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia had a contemptuous exchange with defendant Anthony Mariotto, a Florida resident who participated in the January 6th assault on the Capitol. Judge Walton claimed that Mariotto’s actions undermined the credibility and sanctity of American democracy. In regard to Mariotto’s actions, Judge Walton said, “It was an attack on our government, and I love my government. This government has been good to me. To see somebody destroy, or try to destroy, the Capitol is very troubling to me.”

Great Outreach

1. “Court of Appeals Judge Larry Welch Helps Bring Mock Trial Program to Conestoga High School”

State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, February 17, 2021

<https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/court-appeals-judge-larry-welch-helps-bring-mock-trial-program-conestoga-high-school>

Nebraska Court of Appeals Judge Larry Welch of the 5th Judicial District announced he would coach Conestoga High School’s new mock trial team. The Judge Lyle Strom High School Mock Trial Program, sponsored by the Nebraska State Bar Foundation, relies on judges and attorneys to coach teams and judge regional and state competitions. Welch is a strong proponent of the mock trial program, saying “This program helps students learn skills like flexibility and analytics and decision-making every year, but that’s been even more evident in a year like this.”

2. “Justices Promote Kids Voting Initiative”

Anne Yeager, Court News Ohio, March 12, 2021

http://courtnnewsOhio.gov/bench/2021/kidsVotingInitiative_031221.asp#.YU4pHWZKg6E

Six Ohio Supreme Court Justices participated in a video supporting Kids Voting Ohio, an initiative that teaches children citizenship and encourages them to vote when they turn

18. Each justice focused on a different subject area, including the importance of judicial races, registering to vote, and the importance of civic engagement. Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor summarized the importance of voting by saying, "Study hard, learn all you can, and remember that as a citizen, you have a duty to not only know about your government but to actively participate."

3. "Reno Community Court Relaunches to Connect Homeless with Services, Not Jail Time"
Lucia Starbuck, KUNR, April 8, 2021

<https://www.kunr.org/post/reno-community-court-relaunches-connect-homeless-services-not-jail-time#stream/0>

Judge Christopher Hazlett-Stephens of the Reno, Nevada Municipal Court presides over the Reno Community Court Program. The program, which was relaunched in April, is dedicated to providing unhoused individuals who committed minor offenses with resources like housing and support for mental health and substance abuse instead of jail time. The program allows vulnerable individuals to reconnect with essential services that were made unavailable during the pandemic. Judge Hazlett-Stephens hopes the program will break the cycle of jail time many unhoused individuals are forced to endure, leading instead to a path of genuine rehabilitation.

4. "Judges Appreciate Jurors as their Partners in Justice"
U.S. Courts, May 11, 2021

<https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/05/13/judges-appreciate-jurors-their-partners-justice>

11 federal judges from across the U.S. appeared in a "Court Short" video to express their appreciation for the role jurors play in cultivating a fair and impartial judicial system. Judge Zia M. Faruqi from the District of Columbia told her audience that "a fundamental way that you can ensure our democracy is vibrant and effective is by jury service." The video is a part of a larger "Court Short" video series that features informative discussions on the rule of law and the separation of powers within the United States.

5. "Chief Justice Announces May as Nebraska Problem-Solving Court Month"
Nebraska Judicial Branch, May 12, 2021

<https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/chief-justice-announces-may-nebraska-problem-solving-court-month>

Nebraska Chief Justice Michael G. Heavican held a ceremony proclaiming May as "Nebraska Problem-Solving Court Month." Heavican spoke of the importance of Nebraska's problem-solving courts and urged all Nebraskans to take note of the occasion. Problem-solving courts involve the joint efforts of judges, lawyers, researchers, and educators to create a system of intensive community-supervision, judicial accountability,

and behavioral health treatment in order to address the underlying causes of criminal behavior.

6. “Court Intervention Teams Target Substance Abuse”

U.S Courts, June 23, 2021

<https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/06/23/court-intervention-teams-target-substance-abuse>

In collaboration with judges, probation officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and community based-counselors, the Northern District of California launched two programs designed to help vulnerable individuals within the judicial system. The Alternatives to Incarceration Program (ATIP) offers individuals whose crimes were driven by substance abuse and addiction the chance to receive intensive treatment and counseling services in lieu of jail time. The Reentry Court Program helps individuals reenter society upon leaving prison. The program connects formerly incarcerated individuals with housing, educational, occupational, and substance abuse resources. Magistrate Judge Laurel Beeler said, “Reentry and ATIP give us the opportunity to be part of people’s successes and not just their punishment.”

7. “Kane County Judge Receives Community Service Award”

Kane County Judicial Center, Daily Herald, June 29, 2021

<https://www.dailyherald.com/submitted/20210628/kane-county-judge-receives-community-service-award>

Judge René Cruz of the Illinois 16th Judicial Circuit was awarded with the Kane County Bar Association’s Community Service Award. Judge Cruz actively supports the community by volunteering at the Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry, working with the Aurora Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, reading to children at local schools, assisting in local back-to-school fairs, and performing environmental clean-up. Upon winning the award, Cruz said, “No matter our station in life, there are always opportunities to share our blessings with others.”

8. “Southern Indiana County Gives Offenders Community Service Instead of Jail to Reduce Population”

Elle Smith, WHAS11, June 29, 2021

<https://www.whas11.com/article/news/local/indiana/community-service-jail-clark-county/417-3276cb6f-86c1-4030-ab41-73023aa8d8d7>

Judge Lisa Glickfield of the Clark County, Indiana Circuit Court strongly endorses a Clark County initiative that offers low-level offenders the opportunity to perform community service in-lieu of jail time. The initiative is designed to both reduce overcrowding in jails and give criminal offenders the opportunity to be a productive presence in their community. Judge Glickfield claims that jail time often does more harm

than good for low risk individuals; the Clark County initiative affords individuals with the opportunity to work while completing their community service so as not to disrupt their livelihoods and encourage criminal activity.

9. “Fourth Judicial District Recovery Court to hold Graduation”

Colorado Judicial Branch, July 16, 2021

<https://www.courts.state.co.us/Media/release.cfm?id=1979>

Colorado’s Fourth Judicial District Magistrate Judge Daphne Burlingame presided over a graduation ceremony for 11 recent graduates of the Recovery Court’s rehabilitation program on July 22. The program seeks to reduce criminal recidivism in individuals whose crimes were caused by substance abuse and includes a minimum of two years of intensive supervised probation in addition to multiple levels of treatment services. The Fourth Judicial District’s Drug Court has been in operation since 2000 and has graduated over 1000 participants.

10. “Chief Justice Proclaims September Awareness Month on Opioids and Stimulants Use Crisis, Response”

Florida Courts, September 1, 2021

<https://news.flcourts.org/content/download/781400/file/Opioid-Awareness-Month-2021.pdf>

Chief Justice Charles T. Canady of the Florida Supreme Court proclaimed September as “a month of awareness, training, and action regarding opioids, stimulants, and treatment for related substance use disorders.” Throughout September, the Office of the State Courts Administrator launched a variety of resources for judges, magistrates, and court staff, including an interactive e-learning module, an app that connects court staff with resources to combat substance abuse, and a service that connects courts with live experts on court-specific needs. These resources are a part of the Florida Courts Opioids and Stimulants Response program, an initiative designed to ameliorate Florida’s drug epidemic through the actions of problem-solving and family courts.

11. “Butler County Problem-Solving Court Graduation”

State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, September 20, 2021

<https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/butler-county-problem-solving-court-graduation>

Judge Tina Marroquin of the Butler County Problem Solving Court in David City, Nebraska hosted a graduation ceremony for Thomas and Janetta Albers on September 14th. The ceremony was attended by family, friends, and court staff and marks the completion of an intensive mental health treatment and community supervision program. The program is designed to increase the likelihood that non-violent drug offenders achieve successful rehabilitation as well as to protect public safety.

12. “Four Cook County Judges Volunteer to Conduct up to 50 Weddings for Michigan Avenue Event”
Cook County Court, September 24, 2021
<https://www.cookcountycourt.org/MEDIA/View-Press-Release/ArticleId/2872/Four-Cook-County-Judges-volunteer-to-conduct-up-to-50-weddings-for-Michigan-Avenue-event>
Four Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois Judges volunteered to conduct up to 50 weddings as a part of the “Marriages on the Mile – Weddings at Wrigley” event. Over 350 couples submitted entries describing their relationships and why they want to get married beneath Chicago’s iconic Wrigley Building Bridge. The wedding ceremonies were performed at no cost to the couples, other than the marriage license fee. Judge Diann Marsalek said she and the three other judges volunteered in order to serve the public in a time when many marriages are happening over Zoom or at limited capacity because of COVID.
13. “‘We’re Talking About Increasing Access to Justice:’ North Las Vegas Opens First-Ever Night Court”
Orko Manna, 8 News Now Las Vegas, October 19, 2021
<https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/were-talking-about-increasing-access-to-justice-north-las-vegas-opens-first-ever-night-court/>
North Las Vegas opened its first night court in October under the direction of North Las Vegas Municipal Court Judge Chris Lee. Judge Lee said the court would serve to increase access to justice and constitutes a natural expansion of North Las Vegas’ Community Approach to Rehabilitation and Engagement (CARE) court program. Judge Lee said defendants’ tickets would often go into warrant simply because they couldn’t make it to court. “To be able to provide this to kind of stop that cascading negative effect is something that we’re really proud of,” Judge Lee said.
14. “Judge Lina Hidalgo Announces New Child Tax Credit Program to Help Reduce Child Poverty in Harris County”
Erica Ponder, Click2Houston, October 21, 2021
<https://www.click2houston.com/news/local/2021/10/21/judge-lina-hidalgo-to-announce-new-program-designed-to-reduce-child-poverty-in-harris-county/>
Harris County, Texas Judge Lina Hidalgo unveiled a new program in collaboration with non-profit BakerRipley designed to help increase Harris County families’ access to the child tax credit. Judge Hidalgo is hopeful that the program will significantly decrease Harris County’s 21.7% child poverty rate. The proposed budget for the program includes geographically expanding the reach of volunteer tax assistance and providing individualized assistance with claiming monthly payments.

15. “15 Kids Adopted into Forever Homes in Halloween-Themed Ceremony”

Cortney Moore, Fox News, November 2, 2021

<https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/halloween-adoption-ceremony-15-kids-forever-homes>

Judge Michael Kalil of Jacksonville, Florida’s Duval County Courthouse presided over a Halloween-themed adoption ceremony for 15 children just days before Halloween. Officials at the Duval County Courthouse and Family Support Services of North Florida Inc. decorated the courthouse with Halloween banners, spider webs, eyeball balloons, papier-mâché jack-o-lanterns, and candy buckets. Speaking of the adoption ceremony, Judge Kalil said, “Having an opportunity to oversee adoptions throughout the year and be part of an extraordinary moment for each of the new families coming together, has been a joy. So many children look forward to this time of year specifically because of all the holiday events they can participate in. I hope we’ve been able to bring that same level of happiness to the 15 children and 11 families we’ve brought together at today’s Home for Halloween event.”

16. “Municipal Court to host ‘Java with the Judge’ meet-and-greet”

City of Victoria Office of Communication, Victoria Advocate, November 3, 2021

https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/government/municipal-court-to-host-java-with-the-judge-meet-and-greet/article_dcc7c000-3c16-11ec-8132-03cb67213f20.html

Victoria, Texas Municipal Court Judge Vanessa Heinold hosted a “Java with the Judge” event in which Victoria residents were encouraged to enjoy free coffee and pastries and ask questions about the municipal court system. Speaking of the event, Judge Heinold said, “These events are a great way for me to get feedback and understand the pulse of the community.”

17. “‘A new life’: Austin rings in National Adoption Month as pandemic impacts adoption levels”

Kelsey Thompson, KXAN, November 4, 2021

<https://www.kxan.com/news/local/austin/austin-rings-in-national-adoption-month-with-20-children-finding-their-forever-homes/>

126th District Court Judge Aurora Martinez Jones united 20 children with 12 different families at the beginning of November for National Adoption Month. Ava Smith officially became the adoptive mother of her two grandchildren: Aniah Mariee Crenshaw and Isaiah Art Crenshaw. Judge Martinez Jones, who developed a close relationship with the Crenshaws, expressed excitement over the children’s new life journeys under Smith’s custody. Referring to Judge Martinez Jones, Aniah Crenshaw said, “The judge gave me a letter saying that I was special and unique, and saying she knows we’ve been down a long road and how long it’s been, and just saying we’re unique and special to the world. And it was just great to have her as our judge.”

18. “Kern County recognizes National Adoption Awareness Month”

Kallyn Hobbman, 23 ABC, November 4, 2021

<https://www.turnto23.com/news/local-news/kern-county-recognizes-national-adoption-awareness-month>

Kern County, California Superior Court Judge Wendy Avila hopes to encourage Kern County community members to foster or adopt during National Adoption Awareness Month. Judge Avila, who was adopted by her parents at three months old, said, “I think it’s so important for people to understand that the only thing you really need to ask yourself is, ‘do you have the capacity to love a child?’ Just go into it with faith knowing that the child just wants you to love them and if that’s what you’re willing to do, then the rest will fall into place.” Kern County’s Department of Human Services will host a party for National Adoption Day on November 19 where nearly 30 children will be united with their forever homes.

19. “10 Hamilton County Children Adopted Ahead of Holiday Season”

WLWT Digital Staff, WLWT, November 5, 2021

<https://www.wlwt.com/article/10-hamilton-county-children-adopted-ahead-of-holiday-season/38170759#>

Hamilton County, Ohio Job and Family Services partnered with Hamilton County Probate Court to hold a special day of adoption ceremonies. One such ceremony occurred in Hamilton County Judge Ralph Winkler’s courtroom and featured 10 children being united with 8 different adoptive families. These ceremonies call attention to Hamilton County’s need for more adoptive families in the midst of diminished adoption rates during COVID-19 the pandemic.

20. “‘It was one of the most amazing things I’ve seen’: Courthouse ‘comfort’ dogs gain popularity in Richmond region to aid victims and witnesses in criminal cases”

Mark Bowles, Richmond Times Dispatch, November 5, 2021

https://richmond.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/it-was-one-of-the-most-amazing-things-ive-seen-courthouse-comfort-dogs-gain-popularity/article_7206dbaa-9ecc-5aee-a286-f7572b9cb38b.html

Judge Paul Cella of Virginia’s 11th Judicial Circuit swore in Olive, a bullmastiff, as an official courthouse therapy dog at the Powhatan County Courthouse. Olive, whose owner is Powhatan County’s deputy commonwealth attorney Rob Cerullo, is one of several therapy dogs in Virginia’s court system. Judge M. Duncan Minton Jr. of Chesterfield Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court trained his 3-year-old black lab, Mitz, as a courthouse facility dog. Mitz, who has been working in Virginia’s courts since July, is tasked with comforting victims and witnesses as well as reducing courthouse workers’ stress levels.

Great Pandemic Response

1. “Everyday Heroes: Judge Smith Honored”
Nebraska Judicial District, June 10, 2021
<https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/everyday-heroes-judge-smith-honored>
Judge Julie D. Smith of Nebraska’s First Judicial District was honored as an “everyday hero” by the Nebraska judiciary for taking it upon herself to enact COVID safety protocols for attorneys, law enforcement, and others frequenting the court. Judge Smith also familiarized herself with online conference platform WebEx in order to better communicate with her staff through the transition to remote working and keep the court running seamlessly.
2. “Chief Justice Burke Receives Board of Governors Award from Illinois State Bar Association”
Illinois Courts, June 28, 2021
<https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/News/987/Chief-Justice-Burke-Receives-Board-of-Governors-Award-from-Illinois-State-Bar-Association/news-detail/>
Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke received the Board of Governors Award from the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) in recognition of her role in establishing and facilitating the Access to Judicial Listening Tour. The program, which was created in collaboration with the ISBA, allowed judges, state’s attorneys, public defenders, law enforcement, court personnel, circuit courts clerks and practicing attorneys to come together and discuss how to best maintain a functional judiciary during the pandemic.
3. “Judge Offers an Alternative to Community Service Sentences: Covid-19 Vaccination”
Max Hauptman, The Washington Post, July 29, 2021
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/07/28/baton-rouge-coronavirus-vaccines-community-service/>
As the delta variant surged in Louisiana last July, Baton Rouge Judge Fred Crifasi of the 19th Judicial District Court began offering those appearing before him the opportunity to receive the covid-19 vaccine in lieu of certain community service hours. In the face of some of the highest daily reported cases per capita in the nation, Judge Crifasi justified his decision by claiming that “getting vaccinated is a service to the community.”
4. “Federal Judge Orders COVID Vaccination as Condition of Bail”
Kathryn Rubino, Above the Law, August 19, 2021
<https://abovethelaw.com/2021/08/federal-judge-orders-covid-vaccination-as-condition-of-bail/>

Judge Jed S. Rakoff of the Southern District of New York mandated a defendant receive the COVID vaccination as a condition of their bail. Rakoff says the requirement is comparable to requiring drug screenings and mental-health evaluations and thus well within his jurisdiction. Rakoff hopes the requirement will “protect our communities and the most vulnerable among us from the worst risks of COVID-19.”

5. Natrona County Judge: Get Vaccinated, Reduce Your Court Fine”

Ellen Gerst, Casper Star Tribune August 26, 2021

https://trib.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/natrona-county-judge-get-vaccinated-reduce-your-court-fine/article_944fcacc-860a-57ad-b1ed-0849459a94bf.html

Judge Steven Brown of the Seventh Circuit Court of Natrona County, Wyoming began offering those appearing before him the opportunity to reduce their court fines by up to \$200 if they show full proof of vaccination within 30 days of their trial. Judge Brown started the program last summer after noticing Wyoming’s low vaccination rate. Judge Brown justified his decision by claiming that getting vaccinated was akin to community service and that in a small state like Wyoming, convincing even one or two people to get vaccinated could have a large impact on public health.

6. “Mississippi Judges Promote COVID-19 Vaccine”

Associated Press, September 4, 2021

<https://apnews.com/article/health-coronavirus-pandemic-mississippi-4a6fe0d5c97ef18fedc3fffc36ff3990>

In coordination with the state Department of Health, Thirteen Mississippi judges have made messages to air on TV and radio to encourage people to get the COVID-19 vaccine. This message intends to work in tandem with the other measures the court has taken throughout the pandemic and help keep courts open so that citizens from all backgrounds can be involved in the court system. A few judges shared their personal experiences with COVID-19 and how it has affected their day-to-day work, including stories about friends and relatives who have passed due to the virus.

7. “Remote Proceedings Increased Access for Court Users During Pandemic”

Marg Jackson, Escalon Times, September 15, 2021

<https://www.escalontimes.com/news/remote-proceedings-increased-access-court-users-during-pandemic/>

California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye established the Workgroup on Post-Pandemic Initiatives, an ad hoc organization tasked with analyzing successful court practices adopted during the pandemic. The workgroup, whose goal is to increase access to justice, modernize services, and promote consistency throughout California’s judiciary, supports increased remote access to court proceedings. The workgroup found that the shift toward remote proceedings during the pandemic allowed those with jobs, childcare

obligations, medical conditions, and vulnerable circumstances greater access to the court. The organization also seeks to address the potential drawbacks of remote access, including disparities in internet access and varying degrees of technological competency.

Great Teaching

1. “Missouri-based judges team up for new civic education presentation comparing state, federal courts”

Discover Missouri Courts, January 5, 2021

<https://www.courts.mo.gov/page.jsp?id=171115>

Missouri Judges Ted House of the 11th Judicial Circuit and Henry E. Autrey of the Eastern District of Missouri collaborated with the Supreme Court of Missouri’s Civic Education Committee, the Federal Judicial Learning Center, and the Missouri Bar to produce the “A Conversation About the Courts.” The program features a video in which judges discuss the differences between the federal and state court judicial systems. Judge Rodney W. Sippel of the Eastern District of Missouri said that the project “shows the shared commitment by the state and federal judges to civic education and how our court system works.” Speaking to the project’s importance, Judge Sippel went on to say, “As Thomas Jefferson said, ‘An informed citizenry is at the heart of a dynamic democracy.’”

2. “Creighton Students Engage with Supreme Court in Q&A Session”

State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, April 7, 2021

<https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/creighton-students-engage-supreme-court-qa-session>

Creighton University law professor Carol Knoepfler organized a Q&A session between Nebraska’s Supreme Court Justices and over 100 Creighton University law students. Students asked judges a variety of interesting questions, some of which include how judges are able to separate their emotions from legal issues, most impactful classes from their first year of law school, most important career moves, and many others related to the transition to online court proceedings during the pandemic.

3. “Law Panel Livestream Aims to Explain Judicial System”

Emily Mieure, Jackson Hole News and Guide, April 12, 2021

https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/cops_courts/local/law-panel-livestream-aims-to-explain-judicial-system/article_24eef599-55c9-5b14-a84c-01c70f9ab80e.html

A panel of judges and attorneys will hold a live panel discussion to help inform the public about the historical context and rules of law when it comes to judicial decisions. It will be broadcasted through Wyoming PBS on Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook. This broadcast aims to provide a deeper understanding of the judicial branch and the roles that judges play in the government.

4. “Arkansas Supreme Court Launches Online Learning Games for Students”

Arkansas Judiciary, May 5, 2021

<https://www.arcourts.gov/content/arkansas-supreme-court-launches-online-learning-games-students>

The Arkansas Supreme Court launched a set of interactive learning games for Arkansas students. The games, which are hosted on the online learning platform *Kahoot!* feature short educational videos followed by a series of trivia questions. The games currently center around three topics: state and federal courts, the Arkansas Supreme Court, and Arkansas judicial structure. Arkansas Supreme Court Chief Justice Dan Kemp spoke about the initiative, saying, “We must educate young Arkansans about their government so that they will become more informed and engaged citizens. Game-based learning can be very effective in holding the attention of students and making education fun.”

5. “Judges Learn Students’ Perspectives in Law Day Events”

United States Courts, May 6, 2021

<https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/05/06/judges-learn-students-perspectives-law-day-events>

In honor of Law Day, federal judges around the country connected with students and members of the community to talk about the law and discuss how the justice system affects different communities. This came in the form of various events including virtual classroom visits, video contests, naturalization ceremonies, and a vegetable planting contest.

6. “Chief Justice Visits Virtually with California Students, Educators Honored with Civic Learning Award”

California Courts Newsroom, May 10, 2021

<https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/news/chief-justice-visits-virtually-california-students-educators-honored-civic-learning-award-0>

California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye met with teachers, administrators, and students from six schools awarded with the Civic Learning Award and Champion of Civics Award, both of which are given in recognition of California schools that have displayed an exceptional commitment to civic education. Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye expressed immense gratitude toward those who facilitate civic education, claiming their work was essential in “[effecting] real change.” In her Q&A session with students, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye shared her experience as California’s first Asian-Filipina Chief Justice and expressed her hope for an equitable legal system.

7. “Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer Presents Judges’ Education Initiative to Commission on Civic Education and to Area Judges”

Louisiana Supreme Court, May 25, 2021

https://www.lasc.org/Press_Release?p=2021-15

Louisiana Chief Justice John L. Weimer urged the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education to forge a partnership with the Judges in the Classroom/Students in the Courtroom initiative during his annual State of the Judiciary Address in May. The initiative connects Louisiana judges with elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the state to teach students the importance of the judicial branch and civic education. Chief Justice Weimer expressed hope that the initiative will serve to improve the community and encourage future generations of informed citizens.

8. “Judge Visits CIS Students”

Joyanna Love, The Clanton Advisor, June 2, 2021

<https://clantonadvertiser.com/2021/06/02/judge-visits-cis-students/>

District Judge Chris Speaks of Chilton County, Alabama visited fourth graders at Clanton Intermediate School in June. Judge Speaks encouraged students to make wise choices, especially in the context of social media and peer pressure to do illicit drugs. Judge Speaks emphasized the consequences one’s choices can have on the rest of their life and told his audience to say out of his courtroom—unless they have a career in law enforcement or as an attorney. Judge Speaks told his audience that they too could become judges “if you work hard on your grades and stay out of trouble.”

9. “Teacher Institute”

U.S. District Court, Southern District of Indiana, June 16, 2021

<https://www.insd.uscourts.gov/teacher-institute>

Chief Judge Tanya Walton Pratt of the United States District Court for the South District of Indiana hosted the 2021 Virtual Teacher Institute, a two-day seminar designed for middle and high school civics teachers and answered questions on what it’s like to be a federal judge. Teachers also met with the Circuit Court Librarian to the 7th Circuit Federal Courts, the Supreme Court’s 2020-2021 fellow, Assistant Deans from the IU McKinney School of Law, law clerks, court reporters and more to learn about various teaching methods, new court information, and various legal professions.

10. “Educators, Judge Collaborate on Teaching Civic Education”

Allison Dunn, The Blade, August 11, 2021

<https://www.toledoblade.com/local/education/2021/08/10/educators-judge-collaborate-on-teaching-civic-education/stories/20210810128>

Local educators gathered to meet Senior Judge of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio Judge Jack Zouhary in his courtroom to discuss new ways to teach civics to their students. The training, which was the first of its kind in Ohio, featured Judge Zouhary working with teachers to imagine a more dynamic vision of civic

education that uses historical examples to illustrate key legal concepts. Judge Zouhary discussed plans to arrange for more interactions between educators, students, and judges and hopes to make trainings, such as this one, into regular events.

11. “Pennsylvania Judges Join Local School Districts to Welcome Kids Back to School”

Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, August 25, 2021

<https://www.pacourts.us/Storage/media/pdfs/20210825/170404-pennsylvaniajudgesjoinlocalschooldistrictstowelcomekidsbacktoschool.pdf>

Over 100 judges from across Pennsylvania met with students and teachers to welcome them to the 2021-22 school year. Judges stood with teachers and administrators to welcome students as they exited buses and entered school buildings for the first time this year. Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer said, “The last few years have been hard on teachers and students amid the ongoing pandemic. A critical part of the courts’ mission is to educate all Pennsylvanians about the work and role of the courts in our communities.” The event is part of a larger court initiative to draw attention to the work courts do and role of courts play in local Pennsylvania communities.

12. “Ohio Judge Uses TikTok to Educate, Share Positivity”

Rodneya Ross, Spectrum News 1, August 29, 2021

<https://spectrumnews1.com/oh/columbus/news/2021/08/27/judge-rises-to-tiktok-fame>

Judge William Dawson of the East Cleveland Municipal Court has amassed a TikTok following of over 350,000. Judge Dawson, whose content features an eclectic mix of humorous skits, yoga, and actual footage from his courtroom, uses his platform to educate young people about the workings of state/federal legal systems and the importance of a compassionate judiciary.

13. “Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice attends Constitution Day at Morgan City High”

KATC News, September 17, 2021

<https://www.katc.com/news/st-mary-parish/louisiana-supreme-court-chief-justice-attends-constitution-day-at-morgan-city-high>

Louisiana Chief Justice John L. Weimer met students and faculty at Morgan City High School to celebrate Constitution Day. The visit, which was a part of Louisiana’s Judges in the Classroom/Students in the Courtroom initiative, was designed to impart students with the importance of civic education. Chief Justice Weimer explained the importance of the judicial system in our society and answered questions from students. Chief Justice Weimer claimed that given today’s charged political climate, “the importance of education must be made a priority for our students.”

14. “Judges and Lawyers Engage Students in Conversation About the Constitution”

U.S. Courts, September 23, 2021

https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2021/09/23/judges-and-lawyers-engage-students-conversations-about-constitution?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=usc-news

More than 40 federal judges and attorneys met with 550 students from South Florida high schools both in person and online in observance of Constitution Day. The meeting was a part of the “Civil Discourse and the Constitution: Candid Conversations” initiative, a project that hopes to engage students in conversations about the constitution, civil discourse, and improving one’s decision-making skills. The initiative gives students the opportunity to speak directly with judges and lawyers about the judiciary, an opportunity Judge Beth Bloom says “[puts] a human face on the justice system for students who have little or no real-life exposure to the people who make it work.”

15. “Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Scott J. Crichton Observes Constitution Day 2021 at C.E. Byrd High School”

Louisiana Court, September 24, 2021

https://www.lasc.org/Press_Release?p=2021-26

Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Scott J. Crichton visited C.E. Byrd High School in recognition of Constitution Day and presented his “Crime Consequences and the Power of Choice” program. The program hopes to explain the justice system in comprehensible terms, differentiate between the branches of government, and define legal terms through real life examples. Justice Crichton coordinated his visit with C.E. Byrd High School’s Vice Principal Marilyn Prothro to highlight the importance of civic education. Justice Crichton said, “My goal is to educate young people about criminal law and the real-life consequences of violating the law in a manner that they can understand. I think if they knew the possible ramifications of bad choices, they would make positive decisions accordingly.”

16. “Visits to Local Classrooms Bring Lessons on the Constitution”

Penne Soltysik, California Courts, October 21, 2021

<https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/news/visits-local-classrooms-bring-lessons-constitution>

Judges from across California visited classrooms and libraries across the state both in-person and virtually in celebration of Constitution Day. Judge John Pacheco of San Bernardino County met with Yucaipa High School’s Law and Public Safety Academy, the Santa Clara County Judiciary organized a virtual event detailing the importance of the Constitution for over 1,500 fifth graders, and 10 bench officers from Monterey County acted as guest teachers in classrooms around the county. Since the move to remote learning at the beginning of the pandemic, California judges have increased their classroom visits, making over 150 for 2020-2021 school year.