

## The 2018 NFJE Symposium: “Judicial Excellence in the Twenty-First Century”



**A** strong, independent, responsive judiciary adhering to the rule of law is one of the hallmarks of a democratic society. Although every citizen has an interest in the maintenance of an effective judicial system, lawyers (as officers of the court) have an even keener interest in this. It was with this in mind that DRI created the National Foundation for Judicial Excellence (NFJE) in 2004. For 14 years, the NFJE has successfully produced a first-rate symposium, hosting over 1,500 appellate court judges from 44 states.

The responses of judges to the programs have been universally enthusiastic, and many have expressed appreciation for the high caliber and balanced nature of the program.

It is with this history and the demonstrated need and value of the program that 128 judges from 39 states were welcomed to the 2018 Symposium by NFJE President Robert W. Shively and Symposium Chair Scott Burnett Smith at the Loew’s Hotel in Chicago on Friday, July 20.

Self-improvement is central to our better natures, personally and professionally. The theme of the 2018 NFJE symposium was judicial excellence. The twenty-first century has introduced a number of exciting changes to the judicial process and administration. For instance, technology has revolutionized case management by hyperlinking case briefs to legal authorities available on the internet. Press coverage of the judiciary is now available in real time. Pub-

lic interest in judicial opinions is at an all-time high through blogs, Twitter feeds, and podcasts. And with 50 appellate systems to draw from, new ideas and innovations are sparking efforts to improve the operation of our state courts.

The symposium began Friday afternoon, July 20, with a keynote presentation by Georgetown Law Professor Randy Barnett, one of America’s foremost constitutional law scholars.

The symposium continued on Saturday, July 21, with an address by Kenneth Russo, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, New Orleans, Louisiana, on the use of technology to improve case preparation. This was followed by a panel discus-



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sion on Best Practices for Judicial Administration with breakout discussions on “The Best New Idea That Your Court Has Adopted in the Last Five Years.”

Other sessions followed on the following topics:

- Ways to improve oral argument;
- Crafting opinions in cases with high public interest;
- Selecting better cases for the discretionary docket; and
- How internet resources intersect with judicial ethics and decision making.

There was ample time for judges to socialize and network with a welcome reception, luncheon, and closing reception. As in the past, many of the judges expressed an interest in the program for 2019 and all suggestions will be considered by the program committee in making plans for next year.

