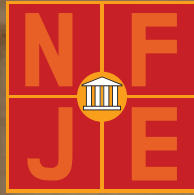


**21ST ANNUAL  
JUDICIAL  
SYMPOSIUM**



**SUPPORTING JUDICIAL  
INDEPENDENCE**  
*A CALL TO ACTION*

**JULY 11–12, 2025**  
**THE INTERCONTINENTAL  
CHICAGO MAGNIFICENT MILE**

Presented by



**NATIONAL FOUNDATION  
FOR JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE**



## PROMOTING EXCELLENCE AFFIRMING JUSTICE

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A strong, independent, educated, responsive judiciary that adheres to the rule of law is one of the hallmarks of a democratic society. While every citizen has an interest in the maintenance of an effective judicial system, lawyers (as officers of the court) have an even keener interest.

With that in mind, NFJE was formed 21 years ago to provide meaningful support and education to the judiciary.



# SUPPORTING JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

## *A CALL TO ACTION*

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The judiciary is a pillar of democracy, ensuring that the rule of law prevails and that justice is administered fairly and impartially. However, as highlighted in the Supreme Court’s 2024 Year-End Report, judicial independence is under increasing attack. Threats against judges have tripled over the past decade, with rising incidents of violence, intimidation, and disinformation campaigns designed to erode public confidence in our courts. These challenges not only endanger individual judges but also threaten the stability and integrity of the legal system as a whole. Now more than ever, the legal community must come together to reinforce the judiciary’s critical role in upholding constitutional rights and the rule of law. As Chief Justice John Roberts emphasized, an independent judiciary is not a privilege for judges but a fundamental necessity for a functioning democracy.

This symposium aims to address these pressing concerns and explore practical strategies to safeguard judicial independence and enhance confidence in the judiciary. Throughout the sessions, judges, academic thought leaders, and civil attorneys will discuss ways courts can increase connection and outreach to their communities, and discuss the growing risks facing our courts and the measures available to counteract them. Topics will include enhancing judicial security, countering misinformation, community outreach and connection, and strengthening legal frameworks to protect judges from undue influence.

Through the symposium, we hope to foster interactive dialogue and actionable solutions to support the judiciary against threats that may compromise its essential function. The symposium is structured to engage the attendees in this critical conversation and contribute to the collective effort to protect one of the most vital institutions in our democratic society. Together, we can work to ensure that our courts remain impartial, resilient, and committed to upholding the principles of justice.

2025 Annual Judicial Symposium  
**SUPPORTING JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE**  
*A CALL TO ACTION*

## Schedule of Events

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### Friday, July 11, 2025

- 1:30–4:00 p.m. **Speed Clerkship Interviewing Session with Law Students from The Appellate Project (TAP)**  
A roundtable discussion for TAP law students about the benefits of clerking for state appellate courts. Following the discussion, we will facilitate informational speed interviews to give judges and candidates a chance to engage one-on-one.
- 
- 4:30–4:45 a.m. **Welcome and Introductions**  
John Cuttino, *NFJE President, Gallivan, White & Boyd, P.A.*
- 
- 4:45–6:00 p.m. **Keynote: How Leaders Use Solitude to Enhance Clarity & Spur Creativity**  
In a time of on-demand everything and hyper-connectivity, Judge Kethledge will help us understand the value of solitude as a method for strengthening ourselves and our leadership.  
Raymond M. Kethledge, *Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit*
- 
- 6:00–7:30 p.m. **Welcome Reception**  
Welcome Reception followed by optional dine-around dinners at nearby restaurants.

### Saturday, July 12, 2025

- 7:30–8:15 a.m. **Continental Breakfast**
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- 8:15–8:30 a.m. **Welcome and Introductions**  
John Cuttino, *NFJE President, Gallivan, White & Boyd, P.A.*  
Steve Plunkett, *Symposium Chair, Bassford Remele*
- 
- 8:30–9:30 a.m. **Bedrock Foundation for the Rule of Law: Advancing Public Trust in the Courts**  
The judiciary's role – and individual judges – seem to be under constant attack. Restoring the public's faith in the rule of law and judges' dedication to it is a critical mission in these challenging times. This panel will explore what judges and lawyers can do to address this crisis.  
Moderator | E. Todd Presnell, *Bradley Arant*  
G. Barry Anderson, *Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court (Ret.)*  
Holly Kirby, *Chief Justice, Tennessee Supreme Court*  
Harold Melton, *Chief Justice, Georgia Supreme Court (Ret.)*
- 
- 9:30–9:45 a.m. **Break**
- 
- 9:45–10:45 a.m. **Priming the Pen: Tips on Writing Like a Supreme Court Justice**  
Today's Supreme Court justices are revolutionizing legal writing. They're breaking outdated grammar rules and embracing clear, concise, compelling prose that reads more like great journalism than a dense legal tome. Based on research spanning 10,000 pages of Supreme Court opinions, this talk highlights how the justices craft powerful, accessible opinions—and how you can use the same techniques to elevate your own legal writing.  
Jill Barton, *Professor, University of Miami Law School*
- 
- 10:45–11:45 p.m. **Judicial Security: A Personal Perspective**  
This session will focus on a case study involving an attempted assassination of a Texas District Court Judge. She will share what we can learn from her case and the steps justices, court staff, and families can take to protect themselves.  
Julie Kocurek, *Judge, 390th District Court, Travis County, Texas*



# The InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile

11:45–1:00 p.m.

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## Lunch

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1:00–2:00 p.m.

### **The Supreme Court: A Momentous Term and a Look Ahead**

Mr. Dupre will provide an entertaining and enlightening presentation on his insights into the U.S. Supreme Court's recent significant decisions.

Tom Dupree, *Gibson Dunn, DC office*

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2:00–2:10 p.m.

## Break

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2:10–3:10 p.m.

### **Ethics: Ethical Obligations of the Judiciary and the Preservation of Independence**

Respect for the judiciary by the public is essential to the preservation of the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. These objectives can be maintained and enhanced only if members of the judiciary conscientiously adhere to our ethical obligations. At a time in the history of our country when the independence and authority of the judiciary are being challenged, that obligation has never been greater. Self-regulation of our own statements and conduct is therefore imperative.

Reggie Walton, Sr., *Judge, United States District Court for the District of Columbia*

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3:10–3:25 p.m.

## Break

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3:25–4:05 p.m.

### **NFJE Nuggets: Reaching the People We Serve**

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Use of Social Media and Community Outreach to Build Trust in the Judiciary and the Judicial Process.

Presiding Judge Dillard will provide a thoughtful look at how social media can be used to bridge the gap between the judiciary and the public. By sharing his personal experiences and insights, Judge Dillard will illustrate how his online presence helps demystify the appellate court process while also portraying the judiciary in a more human, approachable light. His presentation emphasizes the power of openness in building public trust in the legal system.

Stephen Dillard, *Presiding Judge, Georgia Court of Appeals*

Judge Stacy will explore effective strategies for appellate courts to strengthen their connections with the communities they serve. She will highlight outreach initiatives she has both been involved in and about which she is aware. The session will also discuss the importance of transparency, accessibility, and trust-building to enhance public understanding of the judicial process.

Stephanie Stacy, *Justice, Nebraska Supreme Court*

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4:05–4:15 p.m.

## Break

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4:15–5:15 p.m.

### **The Landscape of Climate Change Litigation in the United States**

Climate change litigation has become an increasingly important legal battleground in the United States. This presentation will provide an overview of the current state of climate-related law, including the evolving role of courts in addressing these issues. We will begin with a primer on the science behind climate change, explaining how scientific evidence can inform legal arguments. We will then explore the broader legal landscape, highlighting regulatory actions and judicial decisions that have shaped climate litigation with a special focus on the US Supreme Court's denial of certiorari in *Shell PLC v. City and County of Honolulu* and its refusal to accept original jurisdiction in *Alabama v. California*, which leave approximately 34 cases for adjudication in the state courts. By the end of the session, attendees will have a clearer understanding of the legal and scientific foundations of climate litigation that may present before them for consideration.

Michael B. Gerrard, *Professor, Columbia Law School*

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5:15 p.m.

### **Closing Remarks and Adjourn**

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5:30–7:00 p.m.

### **Closing Reception**

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## Speakers

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**Barry Anderson**, Retired Minnesota Supreme Court Justice, is a 1976 graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, and a 1979 graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School. He was a member of the Minnesota Court of Appeals from August 1998 until his appointment to the Supreme Court in 2004. After 19 years of service reaching the mandatory retirement age, Justice Anderson retired on May 10, 2024.

Prior to his judicial service, Justice Anderson practiced law in outstate Minnesota and was a partner in the law firm of Arnold, Anderson & Dove. His civil trial experience includes personal injury and mechanic's lien litigation and he also served as a city attorney for over a decade.

Justice Anderson's background includes substantial public service as a board member and chair of a variety of community organizations including service clubs, task forces and a local public access channel as well as a wide variety of other community activities.

Justice Anderson also served several terms on the Minnesota Judicial Council, the principal administrative body for the Minnesota Judicial Branch.

Justice Anderson also helped organize and served as a member of the Minnesota Citizens Commission For the Preservation of an Impartial Judiciary, which considered issues relating to judicial independence and impartiality.



**Jill Barton** is a law professor and author of three books on legal writing. A former journalist, she has published thousands of articles for The Associated Press and other news organizations. She currently serves as a professor and the legal writing director at the University of Miami School of Law. Her latest book, *The Supreme Guide to Writing*, details her findings in a five-year study of the U.S. Supreme Court and describes a revolution in legal writing, with the justices casting aside formality in favor of approachable language. She previously authored *So Ordered: The Writer's Guide*. And she coauthored *The Handbook for the New Legal Writer*, a popular law school textbook, that aims to demystify the process of legal writing and inspire beginning legal writers. She has worked as an appellate judicial clerk, conducted workshops for regional and national law firms, and presented her work at conferences nationally, becoming a leading voice on the best practices in writing.



Presiding **Judge Stephen Louis A. Dillard** was appointed as the 73rd judge of the Court of Appeals of the State of Georgia on November 1, 2010, by Governor Sonny Perdue. Prior to his appointment, Judge Dillard was in private practice with James, Bates, Pope & Spivey, serving as chairman of the firm's appellate practice group; served as law clerk to Judge Daniel A. Manion of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit; and worked as an associate for Stone & Baxter. In 2012, 2018, and 2024, he was elected to serve full six-year terms on the Court of Appeals. On July 1, 2017, Judge Dillard was sworn in as the 30th Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for a two-year term, which ended on June 30, 2019. He currently serves as the presiding judge of the Court's Fourth Division, and will begin serving as the presiding judge of the Third Division in 2026.

Judge Dillard is a proud graduate of Samford University (B.A., 1992), Mississippi College School of Law (J.D., with honors, 1996), and Duke University Law School (LL.M. in Judicial Studies, 2025). Most importantly, he has been married to his college sweetheart, the former Krista McDaniel, for thirty-one years. They have three children and are parishioners at Saint Joseph Catholic Church in Macon, Georgia.



**Thomas H. Dupree Jr.** is co-partner in charge of the Washington, DC office of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, co-chair of the firm's nationwide Appellate and Constitutional Law practice group, and a member of the firm's litigation department.

Tom is an experienced trial and appellate advocate. He has argued more than 100 appeals in the federal courts, including in all 13 circuits as well as the United States Supreme Court. Chambers and Partners has named Tom one of the leading appellate lawyers in the United States every year since 2012, and The Legal 500 has similarly recognized Tom for years as one of the nation's "leading lawyers."



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Tom previously served in the United States Department of Justice. He was appointed Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division, and later became the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General. In that capacity, he served as the division's second-in-command, overseeing the more than 900 lawyers in the Civil Appellate, Commercial, Federal Programs and Torts branches, as well as the Office of Immigration Litigation and the Office of Consumer Litigation. Tom was responsible for managing many of the government's most significant cases involving regulatory, commercial, constitutional and national security matters on behalf of virtually all of the federal agencies, the White House, and senior federal officials. Before being named the division's top deputy, Tom ran its largest litigating branch, managing a staff of 280 lawyers.

Legal Times has called Tom "no stranger to high-profile work." Among other things, he played a substantial role in the successful representation of George W. Bush before the United States Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore*, and represented New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady in challenging his "Deflategate" suspension.

Tom argued and won, by a unanimous 9-0 vote, a landmark personal jurisdiction case in the United States Supreme Court, *Daimler AG v. Bauman*. For this achievement, American Lawyer magazine named him Litigator of the Week, noting that he "won over both the liberal and conservative wings of the court."

In 2021, American Lawyer again named Tom its Litigator of the Week. This time he was recognized for winning a high-profile appeal in the midst of the chaos enveloping the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

Tom appears frequently on national television as a legal analyst. He is a regular guest on Fox News Channel and CNN. He has also appeared on NBC Nightly News, PBS NewsHour, ABC World News Tonight, and Good Morning America, as well as on MSNBC, CNBC, Bloomberg, Court TV, and C-Span. He has been quoted in numerous print publications, including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times and many others, discussing legal issues and developments. In addition, Tom has testified before Congress on constitutional and separation-of-powers issues, including the President's authority to act through executive order.

Tom graduated *cum laude* from Williams College, and with Honors from the University of Chicago Law School, where he served as an Editor of the University of Chicago Law Review. After law school, he clerked for the Honorable Jerry E. Smith of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.



**Michael Gerrard** is Andrew Sabin Professor of Professional Practice at Columbia Law School, where he teaches courses on environmental and energy law and founded and directs the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. He is a former Chair of the Faculty of Columbia's Earth Institute and now holds a joint appointment to the faculty of its successor, the Columbia Climate School. Before joining the Columbia faculty in January 2009, he was partner in charge of the New York office of the Arnold & Porter law firm. He practiced environmental law in New York City full time from 1979 to 2008. He was the 2004-2005 chair of the American Bar Association's Section of Environment, Energy and Resources. He has also chaired the Executive Committee of the New York City Bar Association, and the Environmental Law Section of the New York State Bar Association.

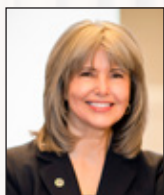
Since 1986, Gerrard has written an environmental law column for the *New York Law Journal*. He is author or editor of fourteen books, two of which were named Best Law Book of the Year by the Association of American Publishers: *Environmental Law Practice Guide* (twelve volumes, 1992) and *Brownfields Law and Practice* (four volumes, 1998). Among his other books are *Global Climate Change and U.S. Law* (with Jody Freeman and Michael Burger) (3d ed. 2023); *Threatened Island Nations: Legal Implications of Rising Seas and a Changing Climate* (with Gregory Wannier, 2013); and *Legal Pathways to Deep Decarbonization in the United States* (with John Dernbach 2019).

## Speakers

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**Raymond M. Kethledge** is a Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, to which he was appointed on July 8, 2008. He received his B.A. in history from the University of Michigan in 1989 and his J.D. from Michigan Law School in 1993. He clerked for Justice Anthony Kennedy of the U.S. Supreme Court and Judge Ralph B. Guy Jr. of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He also worked in the U.S. Senate and later, with two partners, founded a boutique litigation firm, now known as Bush Seyferth & Paige PLLC, in Troy, Michigan. His practice there included a broad mix of trial-court, appellate, and class-action litigation. Judge Kethledge is also the co-author of a book on leadership, entitled *Lead Yourself First: Inspiring Leadership Through Solitude*, which was published by Bloomsbury. He is a lecturer at Michigan and Harvard Law Schools.



**Chief Justice Holly Kirby** was appointed to the Tennessee Supreme Court in 2014, and was selected as Chief Justice in 2023. She is the fourth woman in Tennessee to serve as Chief Justice. Before her appointment to the Supreme Court, Justice Kirby served on the Tennessee Court of Appeals for almost 19 years. Appointed in 1995 at the age of 38, she was the first woman in Tennessee history to serve on the Court of Appeals. Before becoming a judge, Justice Kirby served as a law clerk on the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, and then practiced employment law at a Memphis law firm for 12 years. The law firm selected her as the firm's first female partner. As a lawyer, Justice Kirby chaired Tennessee's Appellate Court Nominating Commission. She graduated from the University of Memphis, with a B.S. in mechanical engineering in 1979, and graduated from the University of Memphis School of Law with high honors in 1982. Justice Kirby has received a number of awards, including Outstanding Young Alumna for the University of Memphis, Outstanding Alumna for the University of Memphis College of Engineering, Special Distinguished Alumna for the University of Memphis School of Law, the Distinguished Leadership Award from Women in Numbers, and Community Mother of the Year by the Tennessee Justice Center. She is married to Memphis businessman Russell Ingram and has two grown children.



**Judge Julie Kocurek** has served as the Presiding Judge of the 390th District Court of Travis County in Austin, Texas since 1999. Judge Kocurek presides over felony criminal cases and has been Board Certified in Criminal Law for 26 years. Her most significant work has been improving the indigent defense system in Travis County and creating the first Mental Health Court in Travis County.

After an assassination attempt on her life in November of 2015, 40 days in the hospital and 30 surgeries, Judge Kocurek returned to the bench after only four months. She came back to the bench because of her passion for being a judge and for helping people change the course of their lives. Judge Kocurek worked with the legislature to pass the Judge Julie Kocurek Judicial Security Act and she continues to advocate for judicial security in Texas and across the country.

Most importantly, Julie Kocurek is a wife and mother of 25-year-old twins.



**Chief Justice Harold Melton** served for 16 years as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia and resigned in 2021 while Chief Justice following his appointment to that position in 2018. Prior to leading Georgia's judicial branch, he served as executive counsel to Governor Sonny Perdue and as an assistant attorney general in the office of the attorney general in the Georgia Department of Law where he also led the Consumer Protection Section for four years. Justice Melton joined law firm Troutman Pepper in July of 2021.

He is a Board Member of Young Life and Atlanta Youth Academies, and in November 2020, Auburn University renamed its student center after Chief Justice Melton, who as an undergraduate became the University's first Black president of the Student Government Association.





**Stephanie F. Stacy** was appointed to the Nebraska Supreme Court in 2015 and was retained by voters in 2018 and 2024.

Justice Stacy received her J.D. from the University of Nebraska College of Law in 1991, graduating with distinction and Order of the Coif. While in law school, she served on the Nebraska Law Review, the Allen Moot Court Board, and the National Moot Court Team.

After law school, she completed a judicial clerkship in the U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska and then joined the law firm of Baylor, Evnen, Curtiss, Grimit & Witt, LLP, where she practiced from 1993 to 2011. Her civil trial practice focused on tort litigation, insurance coverage litigation, and appeals at all levels. She also served as adjunct faculty at the College of Law teaching Trial Advocacy and Pretrial Litigation.

In 2011, she was appointed to serve as a district court judge in Lancaster County Nebraska. She was retained by voters in 2014 and served the district court bench until her appointment to the Supreme Court in 2015. As a district court judge, she presided over an Adult Drug Court and handed a general jurisdiction docket that included civil and family law cases, felony criminal cases, administrative appeals and appeals from county court.

Justice Stacy is a member of the Nebraska State Bar Association, the Robert Van Pelt Inn of Court, the American Board of Trial Advocates, and is a Lifetime Fellow in the Nebraska State Bar Foundation. She co-chairs the Nebraska Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission and has chaired the Nebraska Supreme Court's Continuing Legal Education Commission, and the Judicial Resources Commission.



**Judge Reggie B. Walton** assumed his position as a United States District Judge for the District of Columbia on October 29, 2001, after being nominated to the position by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the United States Senate. Judge Walton was also appointed by President Bush in June of 2004 to serve as the Chair of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission. Former Chief Justice William Rehnquist also appointed Judge Walton to the federal judiciary's Criminal Law Committee, effective October 1, 2005. In May, 2007, Chief Justice John Roberts appointed Judge Walton to serve as a Judge of the United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which is a 7-year appointment. Judge Walton is also an instructor in the Harvard University Law School's Advocacy Workshop and a faculty member at the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada.

Judge Walton, in his current role as a United States District Court Judge, recently presided over the trial of I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, who was charged with and convicted of perjury and obstruction of justice. Mr. Libby was Vice-President Dick Cheney's Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor, and he was also a National Security Advisor to President George W. Bush. Previously, Judge Walton served as an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, as President George H. W. Bush's Associate Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the Executive Office of the President and as President Bush's Senior White House Advisor for Crime. Before his appointment to the Superior Court bench in 1981, Judge Walton served as the Executive Assistant United States Attorney in the Office of the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, where he had previously served as an Assistant United States Attorney. Prior to serving as a federal prosecutor, Judge Walton served as an assistant public defender in the Defender Association of Philadelphia.

Judge Walton has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including an Honorary Doctorate of Laws Degree from West Virginia State University (2008), the National Organization for Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) Community Service Award, Washington D.C. Chapter (2008), a Leadership in Education Award from the American University, Washington Semester Program (2007); the 1997 Honorable Robert A. Shuler Memorial Award, presented by the Assistant United States Attorneys' Association; and the 1993 William H. Hastie Award, presented by the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association.

**You don't want to miss this year's event, we are returning to Chicago!**



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## Cancellations

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