



ILLINOIS JUDGES ASSOCIATION

THE GAVEL

SUMMER 2025

Hon. Celia Gamrath, Editor

The Gavel is a periodical designed to inform, engage, and connect members of the Illinois Judges Association.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Call to Action: Bridging the Courthouse and Community

I am an optimist. But even I must admit, these are fraught times for our legal system and for judges. It chills me to hear discussion of the withering of confidence in courts. A NCSC survey found that state courts are the most trusted judicial institution, but only 61% of respondents had great, or even some, confidence in the courts. On an academic scale, that is a solid and disappointing D minus!

(See page 2)

Honoring IJA Officer Heinz Rudolf's Leadership & Advocacy



The Illinois Judges Association proudly recognizes the exceptional efforts of **IJA Officer and Secretary Judge Heinz Rudolf**, whose commitment to youth education and community involvement continues to set the standard for judicial outreach.

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IJA Officers

- Hon. Elizabeth Rochford, President
- Hon. Patrice Ball Reed, 1st Vice President
- Hon. Julie Katz, 2nd Vice President
- Hon. Patricia Sheahan, 3rd Vice President
- Hon. Heinz Rudolf, Secretary
- Hon. Diann Marsalek, Treasurer

(President's Message continued from page 1)

Perhaps more concerning, an informal study by the National Judicial College in 2024 revealed that the public's dismal view of courts has dramatically impacted morale on the bench.

Why is this important?

Illinois' renowned expert on judicial ethics, Ray McKoski, wrote,

“Our democracy survives only because the public trusts the legal system. Judges symbolize the system of justice and its essential components of independence, integrity, and impartiality. This confidence in the administration of justice is synonymous with confidence in judges.”

So, confidence in judges translates directly to the public perception of the legal system, which is in turn essential to the survival of democracy! That is one enormous responsibility in our hands.

To establish transparency, increase confidence in the courts, and build morale among our ranks, judges need to **build a bridge from courthouse to community** across Illinois. This theme captures our mission to deepen connections between the judiciary and the diverse communities we serve—from classrooms to civic halls and neighborhood centers.

Sending judges out of the courtroom can spark instinctive concerns about ethics. The Judicial Ethics Committee assures us that making presentations about our legal system to community groups like Rotaries, PTOs, and League of Women Voters is allowed. Ray McKoski advises that informal, non-adversarial communications outside the stress of the courtroom are not only permitted but enthusiastically supported by the Illinois Code of Judicial Conduct.

Under the leadership of co-chairs Dan Jasica and Cecilia Horan, our Media Committee has developed talking points for judges on a variety of issues. Among them: How Judges Become Judges; Illinois Code of Judicial Conduct; Judicial Independence; Judicial Decision Making; Fun Facts About our Supreme Court; and What To Expect When You Come to Court, and more!

Our Educational Programming Committee led by Clare Quish and Jenny Johnson is developing video tips on how to give an effective speech and respond to questions, among other topics.

I will be visiting all 25 Circuit Courts in the state to meet judges in their own professional environment, encouraging them to join this initiative. My spirit is buoyed to think of us wading into our neighborhoods with valuable messages about the work of our courts. We will build community confidence, enhance the well-being of our judges, and save democracy too!

This moment reminds me of the valuable benefits of membership in this club of 1,300 colleagues across our state. The IJA provides guidance, purpose, inspiration, and collegiality, confirming that my optimism is well-founded.

Thank you for trusting me with this important position of leadership. We have an ambitious and exciting journey ahead. I am proud and grateful to be in your company along the way.

ONWARD!

Inside the 2025-26 IJA Installation

A Day of Celebration: Welcoming the IJA Leadership

The Illinois Judges Association proudly welcomed its new leadership during the 2025 Installation Ceremony, a moment of tradition, unity, and inspiration. This annual event honors the commitment of judges across the state who step forward to lead, serve, and support the mission of the IJA. Browse this gallery to relive the highlights of a memorable day filled with camaraderie, recognition, and a shared dedication to justice.



(Rudolf story continued from page 1)

Judge Rudolf has long gone the extra mile — not only representing the judiciary in court but also serving as a trusted presence in classrooms throughout **St. Clair County**. This season he worked closely with community stakeholders, including **State Senator Christopher Belt**, to address a growing concern among parents, educators, and legal professionals alike: **online safety and cyberbullying prevention for students**.

Their collaboration led to the adoption of **Senate Resolution 5 (SR5)**, introduced by Senator Belt, which brings critical attention to digital safety for Illinois' K–12 students and encourages further education about responsible online behavior. The resolution commends efforts by organizations like the **Illinois Judges Association** and impactful programs such as **Worries of the World Wide Web**, which teaches students how to safely navigate life in the digital world.

“When judges step into classrooms, we do more than speak — we connect,” said IJA President Justice Elizabeth Rochford. “The IJA’s programs like Worries of the World Wide Web allow us to engage with young people on critical issues such as online safety, digital responsibility, and the real-world consequences of virtual choices.”

Judge Rudolf has been instrumental in expanding this program in schools throughout the **Twentieth Judicial Circuit**, including a strong partnership with **Freeburg Community Consolidated School District 70**. His direct involvement — from giving presentations to coordinating with educators — has drawn praise from colleagues and civic leaders.



“The Twentieth Judicial Circuit initiative has been led by Circuit Judge Heinz Rudolf,” said Chief Judge Andrew J. Gleeson. “As a hands-on participant in these presentations, he has done yeoman’s work on behalf of the Court and our school children.”

The Illinois State Senate formally commended the IJA, the Twentieth Judicial Circuit, and Judge Rudolf’s personal leadership in this vital area of public service. **Senate Resolution 5** was officially adopted on May 20, 2025 — a moment of pride for everyone involved in making Illinois schools safer, smarter, and better prepared for the digital age.

On behalf of the Illinois Judges Association, we thank Judge Heinz Rudolf for his tireless efforts, unwavering dedication, and heartfelt service. His work is a shining example of what it means to bridge the bench and the community.



ILLINOIS JUDGES
ASSOCIATION

Enjoy the benefits of IJA membership.

Join or renew today

Join the Movement: Bridging the Courthouse and Community

This year, under the leadership of President Justice Elizabeth Rochford, the Illinois Judges Association is proud to launch a bold, outward-facing initiative: Bridging the Courthouse and Community.

This theme reflects our commitment to **making the judiciary more accessible, transparent, and connected to the people we serve**. And now, we're calling on all IJA members to be a part of it.

The IJA Media Committee has prepared more than 10 public presentations that cover essential judicial themes, including:

1. What to Expect When Going to Court
2. How a Judge Becomes a Judge
3. Judicial Decision Making
4. Judicial Independence
5. Orders of Protection, Stalking, and No Contact Orders
6. Help For Self-Represented Litigants ("SRLs")
7. Pretrial Fairness Act & Setting Bond in Illinois Courts
8. Judicial Ethics
9. All About the Appeals Process
10. Illinois Supreme Court History/Fun Facts

IJA members can deliver these engaging programs at local rotaries, League of Women Voters offices, libraries, community centers, and civic spaces across the state—wherever your local community gathers.

To support this effort, the IJA has also compiled a broad database of community organizations in Illinois, along with draft letters, press releases, and other helpful materials to make your outreach smooth and impactful.



President Rochford is committed to visiting all 25 judicial circuits this year to meet with judges and inspire participation in this exciting opportunity. Her message is clear: We have a duty not just to serve justice, but to earn trust.

Now is the time to get involved. Let's bring the courtroom into the community, and bring the community into a better understanding of our work. Sign up below to be a part of Bridging the Courthouse and Community. Together, we can make a lasting impact—one conversation, one classroom, one community at a time.

Sign up today

In Every Story, There's Strength

Mental Health Summits Empower Communities

By Judge John A. Fairman, Circuit Court of Cook County

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**. This year, Cook County officials **launched a series of six** Mental Health Summits to empower individuals and families navigating the complexities of mental health.

On **May 1, 2025**, more than **500 community members, professionals, caregivers, and advocates** gathered at the **Markham Courthouse** in south suburban Cook County for the **inaugural summit**, making it clear that the need for accessible information, resources, and support is urgent and widespread.

This year's national theme, **"In Every Story, There's Strength,"** resonated deeply throughout the event, highlighting the resilience found in those affected by mental health challenges—whether as individuals, families, or as part of broader support systems.

The Mental Health Summits are part of an initiative to bring **mental health awareness, legal education, and support services directly into the community**, especially for those caring for loved ones with mental health needs. The mission is to **empower caregivers and community members** with practical tools and a better understanding of the law and available resources.

I was honored to co-host this important event with **Clerk of the Circuit Court Mariyana T. Spyropoulos**, whose support and commitment to community outreach has been invaluable. By meeting people where they are—in their neighborhoods, in courthouses they trust—we are demystifying the legal process and showing families that they are not alone.

Breaking Down the Summit

The Markham summit featured panels and presentations from judges, mental health professionals, attorneys, and service providers. We covered these topics:

- **Mental Health Services & Access**
- **Emergency Hospitalization Orders**
- **Guardianship and Powers of Attorney**
- **Special Needs Trusts**
- **Crisis Intervention Strategies**
- **Firearm Restraining Orders ("FRO")**

Attendees had the opportunity to connect directly with representatives from legal aid organizations, hospitals, and advocacy groups, and many shared personal stories of navigating the mental health system that reflected hardship and hope.



Mental Health Awareness is a Judicial Responsibility.

Mental Health Awareness Month in May is a time to amplify voices, reduce stigmas, and connect individuals to resources that support their well-being.

Within the court system, it's also a time to reflect on the judiciary's role in fostering access to justice—not just in the courtroom, but in community wellness as a whole.

As the summits continue across the county, the hope is to create a ripple effect: **more informed citizens, more supported families, and a stronger bridge between the judiciary and the public it serves**. In every story, especially those involving mental health, there truly is strength.

JUDGES ARE . . .

by Hon. Elizabeth M. Rochford, IJA President

Fair weather hasn't distracted Illinois judges from their commitment to advancing the judiciary, promoting the legal profession, and providing assistance to our communities. Thanks to all who shared examples of Illinois judges making a difference. Please keep sending these accomplishments to erochfordatty@sbcglobal.net or to info@ija.com.

I am proud to share that **JUDGES ARE . . .**

BETTERING HUMANITY

Illinois Supreme Court JUSTICE JOY V. CUNNINGHAM received an appointment as Rector for Government and Law of the Lincoln Academy of Illinois. The Lincoln Academy presents the Order of Lincoln, the state's highest civilian award for public service and professional achievement.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT AS LEGAL LUMINARIES

The Illinois Bar Foundation and the Illinois Judges Foundation co-hosted a Legal Luminary event honoring JUDGE RUBEN CASTILLO, Ret., JUSTICE LLOYD A. KARMEIER, Ret., JUSTICE M. CAROL POPE, Ret., and others for their extraordinary contributions to the legal profession and community.

RECEIVING RIGHTEOUS RECOGNITION

Illinois Supreme Court JUSTICE DAVID OVERSTREET was honored by the Hellenic Bar Association with the Socrates Dikastes Award.

Cook County Circuit JUDGE WILLIAM J. HADDAD, Ret., was honored by the Arab American Bar Association with its Founder's Legacy Award.

JUDGE COLLEEN R. DALY received the Northwest Suburban Bar Association's Public Service Award at its annual Judges' Night, and JUDGE MOHAMMAD A. AHMAD was presented the Scales of Justice Award.

JUDGE LISA MARINO received the Public Service Leadership Award from the Italian American Political Coalition.

Lake County JUDGE CHUCK JOHNSON, Ret., received the Benedict J. Ori Award, recognizing his work as a former Lake County prosecutor and his contributions to law enforcement, the bar association, and the judiciary.

Illinois Appellate Court JUSTICE DEBRA WALKER received the Carole Bellows Woman of Influence Award from the Illinois State Bar Association.

TRAILBLAZERS

The Northwest Suburban Bar Association acknowledged the many achievements of JUSTICE JESSE REYES with its Trailblazing Jurist Award.

THE BEST OF THE BEST

The North Suburban Bar Association graciously hosted many judges and honored a trio of exceptional jurists at its Annual Judges Night, including JUSTICE CELIA GAMRATH, JUDGE JILL CERONE-MARISI, and JUDGE JACK HAGERTY.

GRACIOUS HOSTS

Cook County CHIEF JUDGE TIMOTHY C. EVANS welcomed a cohort of leaders from across the country associated with the CORE Justice Network, a program focused on empowering county leaders to identify and eliminate disparities in the local justice system.

NOT QUITTERS

Illinois Supreme Court Justice RITA GARMAN, Ret., was toasted by legal and judicial colleagues from across the state as she officially joins Webber and Thies, P.C. as a partner.

Resolute Systems added retired JUDGE CLARE E. McWILLIAMS to its Chicago team of dispute resolution professionals.

Immediate IJA past president JUDGE MARY COLLEEN ROBERTS, Ret., joined the JAMS panel offering dispute resolution services.

COMMITTED

Hundreds of Illinois attorneys gathered at the Federal Plaza in Chicago to mark Law Day and retake the oaths they swore when joining the Illinois bar. The reaffirmation of commitment to uphold the United States and Illinois Constitutions was administered by JUDGE MARY COLLEEN ROBERTS, Ret.

PROMOTING AND FOSTERING EQUAL TREATMENT

The Alliance of Illinois Judges, formed by and serving in support of LGBTQ+ judges and law students, honored JUSTICE CYNTHIA COBBS with its Honorary Chairperson Award; JUDGE MARY COLLEEN ROBERTS, Ret., with its Sebastian Patti Award; and JUDGE STUART KATZ, Ret., with its Founders Award.

TAKING THE LEAD

JUDGE JILL ROSE QUINN was installed as President of the Alliance of Judges, and her oath was administered by Illinois Supreme Court JUSTICE JOY V. CUNNINGHAM.

CELEBRATING ETHNICITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

MALDEF, the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization, hosted its 2025 Gala in Chicago and paid tribute to Appellate Court JUSTICE JESSE G. REYES with the Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Legal Services.

ADVANCING ASSISTANCE TO SRLs

CHIEF JUDGE TIMOTHY C. EVANS welcomed the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC)'s Court Navigation Network to the Daley Center to learn and collaborate about assisting Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs).

STAYING CURRENT

Many Illinois judges attended the seminar "Truth and Perception in the Digital Age," including: CHIEF JUDGE ANDREW GLEESON of St. Clair County, CHIEF JUDGE CHRIS- TOPHER THRELKELD of Madison County, JUDGE FREDRICK BATES, JUDGE CATHERINE SCHNEIDER, JUDGE WILLIAM YU, JUDGE WILLIAM CLAY, and JUDGE HEINZ RUDOLF.

MAKING HISTORY

Three female sitting judges have assumed bar leadership roles for 2025–2026: JUDGE NICHOLE PATTON as President of The Chicago Bar Association; JUDGE BRIDGET DUIGNAN as President of the Illinois Bar Association; and JUSTICE ELIZABETH ROCHFORD as President of the Illinois Judges Association. All three look forward to collaborating and advancing the legal profession.

PARTICIPATING IN LAW DAY

JUDGE BRIDGET DUIGNAN spoke at an annual Law Day event hosted by the Cook County Bar Association.

TEACHING ATTORNEYS

The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin hosted an event for new and seasoned attorneys, "How to Secure Better Settlements Before Trial". The discussion was led by JUDGE PATRICK J. SHERLOCK, and panelists included JUDGES THOMAS V. LYONS and PATRICIA O'BRIEN SHEAHAN.

INSPIRING PROFESSIONALISM

CHIEF JUSTICE MARY JANE THEIS led the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law's first-year students in the Pledge of Professionalism during the orientation in January. The event was sponsored by the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Members of the Illinois legal community including JUSTICE JESSE G. REYES joined thousands of others taking an icy plunge into Lake Michigan, participating in an annual event that raises money for Special Olympics.

ADVANCING WOMEN

Cook County CHIEF JUDGE TIMOTHY C. EVANS hosted the 26th annual Women Everywhere (WE) judicial reception. WE is a non-profit organization driven by the volunteer efforts of attorneys, judges, bar associations, and others in the Chicago legal community.

SUPER HUMAN

JUDGE HEINZ RUDOLPH is Illinois' most prolific reader to students in support of IJA's Paging it Forward initiative and is also the presenter of Worries of the World Wide Web. Schools he has recently visited include: Cahokia School District 187, E. Morris Elementary, LaLumier Elementary, Maplewood Elementary, Estelle Sauget School of Choice, and Penniman Elementary. Judge Rudolf graciously presented each principal with a JUDGE MARTOESIAN gavel.

AND LAST, BUT MOST CERTAINLY NOT LEAST, REMEMBERED WITH PRIDE, RESPECT, AND GRATITUDE

Justice Thomas Hoffman and Justice Thomas Welch.

Committee Docket

Get an inside look at the important work happening across the Illinois Judges Association through our standing and special committees. Each committee plays a vital role in advancing the IJA's mission—from retired judges, in schools, judicial wellness, retention, and more.

For complete reports from each committee outlining their purpose, recent activity, and goals for the 2025–2026 term, please visit our website via the link below.

Stay informed, stay connected, and consider getting involved!

Visit IJA Committees

(Requires member login)

Calendar Call

The Illinois Judges Association is proud to offer a dynamic lineup of events to support, connect, and inspire our members in the second half of 2025. From wellness activities and educational seminars to community outreach and committee meetings, there's something for everyone.

Whether you're looking to engage with colleagues, learn something new, or give back to your community, we invite you to mark your calendar and get involved.

August

Race Judicata, Thursday, August 14, 2025, Lincoln Park, [Register here](#)

September

Self-Care September BINGO! A fun and engaging challenge from the IJA Wellness Committee to help judges prioritize small, meaningful acts of self-care throughout the month. Stay tuned for details.

October

Pro Bono Week, October 22–26, 2025



November

IJA Day of Service, brought to you by the Pro Bono Committee, will bring IJA members across the state together to complete meaningful community service.

December

The 54th Annual IJA Joint Mid Year Meeting with the ISBA, December 11–12, 2025, JW Marriott, Chicago

Other Bar Events: [Statewide Calendar of Bar Events](#)
[Illinois State Bar Association Events](#)