



**THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL
NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION**

THE JUDICIAL RECORD

AUGUST, 2025

CENTENNIAL CONVENTION EDITION

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NOW PRESIDING-A MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING CHAIR OF JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION



Fellow Judicial Council Members:

It is with great pride that I bring you these final greetings as the 54th Chair of the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association. We are concluding an amazing and productive year which has culminated with the Centennial Convention of the National Bar Association in Chicago.

As I look back on the preceding year, I am reminded of the many gatherings and accomplishments that our Council has experienced. As a result of our Kwanzaa Fundraiser and our American Judicial Council Foundation we were able to fund academic and bar study scholarships for our future Black lawyers and judges at several universities.

As you will see, our annual Mid-Winter Meeting in Cartagena, Colombia was an extraordinary experience. This amazing South American city served as the backdrop for timely CLE sessions, the presentation of our A. Leon Higgenbotham award as well as numerous historical and cultural activities. We also participated in the NBA's Listening and Engagement Tour which went through cities such as Chicago, Houston, Birmingham, Miami, Orlando and Detroit. We also continued our commitment to educating the public about the importance of jury service.

I am pleased to report that Council membership increased significantly during the past year and there were several first-time attendees at our National Convention. We wholeheartedly welcome our new judges, and we thank you for being amongst the record 318 judges in attendance in Chicago.

As I conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my fellow officers, the Executive Board and the Past Chairs of the Judicial Council, whom I affectionately call "The 53", for their constant support of me personally and of the Judicial Council as a whole to make this year a success. I look forward to supporting Justice Freddrenna Lyle as she begins her tenure as Chair of the Council. Her commitment to the Judicial Council is well established and I know she will lead us through a fantastic year.

Yours in Service,

Judge Brendette Brown-Green

Chair

National Bar Association Judicial Council, 2024-25



MEET OUR NEW CHAIR

JUSTICE FREDDRENNNA M. LYLE

Justice Freddrenna M. Lyle began her term as Chair of the Judicial Council at the Annual Meeting in Chicago. We asked Justice Lyle for some thoughts as she looks ahead to her year leading our division.

You have previously served the Judicial Council in numerous capacities. Talk about those experiences and how they have now inspired you to lead the Judicial Council as Chair?

Early in my legal career my boss took me to a meeting of the Cook County Bar Association where I found a home. I worked in every capacity of the organization and became President. During those years I was also introduced to the NBA, worked on committees, became Region VII Director, spent 1 year on the Board and attended conventions. I then took a break when I spent 13 years in the Chicago City Council. When I was appointed to the bench, I joined the Judicial Council. I was elected to the Board under past Chair Leonard Murray.

My first committee assignment under Chair Anne Marie Clarke was working on Memorial, Good and Welfare, writing Resolutions and doing Google searches looking for recently deceased Judges across the country. Next, I was on the mid-winter meeting to South Africa under past Chair Shauna Graves Roberson who entrusted me with bringing greetings during the opening. She then undertook the formidable task of holding the first ever virtual Annual Meeting and appointed Alfreda Talton Harris and myself as co-chairs.

Next, I was on the Scholarship Committee for several years and later co-chair of the Committee. I then became the Treasurer and finally, co-chair of Long-Range Planning.

For most of my career I have proudly belonged to a legacy Bar. The Memorial, Good and Welfare Committee reminded me that Black Judges have done and are doing, phenomenal work in every corner of this Country. Giving the opening remarks in a Church in Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa was beyond my wildest dreams. And a reminder that the struggle for rights and privileges afforded to others upon birth and denied to those of us who are kissed by the sun, continues regardless of where the diaspora has taken you. That struggle motivates the Scholarship Committee and in a time such as this, each of us.

Talk about your excitement assuming the position of Chair in your hometown of Chicago at the Centennial NBA Conference.

It is extremely exciting to begin this next chapter in the city, where I currently sit on the Illinois Appellate Court. Friends and family that ordinarily would not be able to join me are able to share in my very special day.



Justice Lyle is sworn in as Chair of the Judicial Council by Hon. P. Scott Neville of the Illinois Supreme Court

What are biggest issues or concerns that Black judges across the nation are facing that you hope to address as Chair?

Not a week goes by without seeing a story about a Judge being threatened. Judicial security has become one of the top issues Black Judges across this Country are facing. We intend to continue raising the issues with public policy makers while holding sessions designed to provide our Judges with safety awareness tips.

Second, only to our safety, the constant barrage from people with access to a microphone castigating a judicial ruling is a major concern. The attacks undermine public respect for the Courts and fuel the delusion some have within. Our system is built upon the voluntary compliance and each attack chips away at the public confidence in the Courts which encourages that compliance. The system crumbles absent that compliance.

How would you describe the benefits of the Judicial Council to someone who is considering joining?

You can attend phenomenal continuing legal education from Judges and Law School Professors and do so in a 'safe space'. We fellowship with Colleagues who may have shared similar situations and found a solution that you can use. We brainstorm on survival skills including wellness. We leave each meeting having learned something new or met someone who was helpful. We meet to learn the best practices and fellowship with those who 'are like us'. If you ever watched the TV series Cheers, you've heard the theme song:

*"Sometimes you wanna' go, where everybody knows your name.
And they're always glad you came."*

That's us!



What would you say are your 3 main initiatives that you seek to accomplish during your time as chair?

1. As a national organization we are comprised of Affiliates in Regions. We must strengthen our relationship with our Affiliates and in doing so we increase our sustainability as an organization. What does this look like? Hosting and attending events in the Regions; working with and participating in Affiliate programming; assisting the Affiliates in increasing membership and programming; and providing whatever assistance we might provide.
2. Expanding our Judicial Clerkship program Clerkships are one of the greatest resume enhancements. It is also a fantastic mentoring opportunity to afford our young people, when doors once opened to them are now being slammed shut.
3. Navigating the times- threading the needle- On one hand for the second year, the public has an improved sense of confidence in state courts. On the other hand, we are faced with the knowledge that a real threat looms over our entire judicial system. How we navigate during this time will determine whether we subsist or perish?

Right now, we exist in a dual State. We, the Judiciary, go to work every day operating in a normative fashion, upholding our oaths. And then there is the other state that has no concern for the rule of law, nor respect for its institutions. We operate daily hoping, wishing and praying that one day the world will right itself. We work towards that day when once again Judges will be respected, and their orders complied with voluntarily. Until that time, we go to work, open our courts, empanel the juries and continue moving. Each day with every assault on the rule of law we become more frightened that the institutions we relied upon for

our protections, will not hold. But if the upside-down world rights itself, we need to be ready to prevent future generations from ever being in this place, again. As your Chair, I'll work with the members of our organization as we (the collective, we) figure it all out.

Finally, what two words would you use to describe your feelings as you contemplate the coming year as chair?

Excited and anxious.

Thank you, Justice Lyle. We welcome your service as Chair of the Judicial Council and look forward to a fantastic year.

2025 JUDICIAL COUNCIL MID WINTER CONFERENCE- DESTINATION CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA



The Judicial Council held its annual Mid-Winter meeting in this vibrant Colombian city, home to many Afro-Colombians. The week-long trip featured many CLE sessions, opportunities to meet with Colombian legal professionals and afforded attendees the opportunity to tour and enjoy the many cultural and historical aspects of the city.



A. Leon Higginbotham Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award



Hon. Johnny Hardwick was awarded the 2025 A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award during the Mid-Winter Conference. After a stirring address by Judicial Council Chair-Elect, Justice Freddrenna Lyle detailing Judge Higgenbotham's accomplishments and career highlights, Judge Hardwick, a former Judicial Council Chair, was presented this well-deserved recognition for his consistent and unwavering dedication to the legal profession throughout his recently concluded career.



Judge Hardwick, flanked by Past Chairs of the Judicial Council and NBA President Wiley Adams

Judge Paula J. Green provided her thoughts and observations of the trip.

Please give us your overall impressions of the Mid-Winter trip to Cartagena.

Cartagena was an excellent choice. The accommodation was of high (our) standards. The tours & tour company were professional and receptive to our needs. The food was outstanding. We had no safety concerns, and I observed police presence everywhere we went.



Was this your first time to Cartagena or Latin America?

It was but I returned to Cartagena a month later and took a tour in the African Colombian neighborhoods. It was wonderful.

What, did you gather, were the impressions of the people you met to this number of Black American judges and attorneys?

The Colombians were gracious and inviting.

What were one to two things that struck you as you think back on Cartagena?

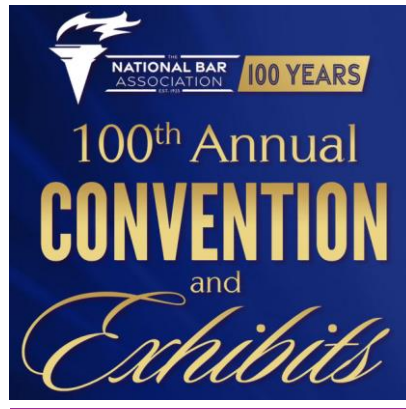
I especially liked that they embraced their African ancestry.



Let me also add that what impressed me was the high level of education that Indigenous and African- Colombians have.



THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL AT THE N.B.A. CENTENNIAL CONVENTION



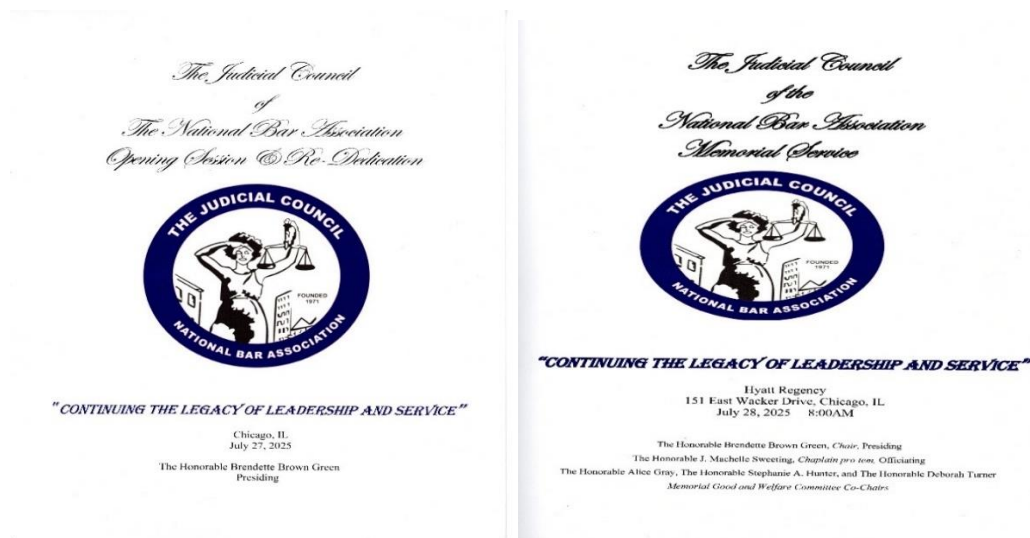
The National Bar Association concluded its week-long Centennial Convention on August 1, 2025 in Chicago and the Judicial Council was active throughout.

After attending the Convention's opening plenary session, the Council attended Church services at Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago's Southside and presented the congregation with a \$2000 donation to their Scholarship Fund. We then enjoyed lunch at a local Black-owned restaurant.



Over 300 Judges from across the country attended church at Trinity United Church of Christ

On **Monday**, we held our annual Opening and Rededication Sessions as well as our Memorial Service to remember our fallen Judicial Brethren and Sistren.



We began our week-long series of CLE Sessions that provided valuable information and insight on many topics, including: judicial safety, important legal updates and trends, the importance of prioritizing mental and physical health, perspectives on Juvenile Dependency and Delinquency, avoiding potential landmines in decision-making and communications, Judicial Mentorship as well as the use of Artificial Intelligence and other tools to help navigate increasing workloads



Judicial Council Members took advantage of several CLE opportunities at the annual Convention.

However, the highlight of the day was attending the [fireside chat featuring Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson](#) as she discussed her upbringing in Miami, her journey through Harvard University, her career highlights and read excerpts from her memoir “Lovely One” detailing her swearing-in as a member of the Supreme Court.

Tuesday, we hosted our annual meeting and elected a new slate of officers for the 2025-26 Judicial Council Year. Our new officers and Executive Board Members are as follows:

Officers

Chair-Justice Freddrenna Lyle, Chicago IL

Chair Elect- Hon. David Hobdy, Bessmer, AL

Recording Secretary-Hon. Alicia Ruffin May, Birmingham, AL

Financial Secretary-Hon. Harrison Gregg, Jr., Houston, TX

Treasurer-Hon. Andrew L. Dixon, III, Tallahassee, FL

Historian-Hon. Herman Marable, Flint, MI

Executive Director- Hon. Luke Lavergne, E. Baton Rouge

Parliamentarian-Hon. Patricia J. Titus, Los Angeles CA

Immediate Past Chair-Hon. Brendette Brown-Green, Birmingham, AL

Executive Board Members

Hon. Noell Allen, Indianapolis, IN

Hon. Clifford Brown, Austin, TX

Hon. Sharon Burrell, Rockville, MD

Hon. Harry Cantrell, New Orleans, LA

Hon. Valerie Cartwright, New York, New York

Hon. Bonita Coleman, Markham, IL

Hon. Miesha Darrough, Miami, FL

Hon. Alice Gray, Little Rock, AR

Hon. Imani Drew, Kankakee, IL

Hon. Amanda Heath, Augusta, GA

Hon. Rodney Smith, Miami, FL

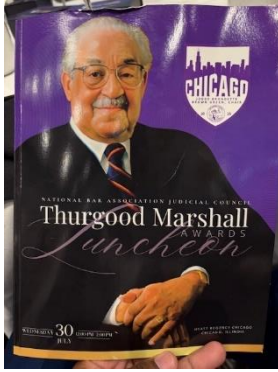
Hon. Karelia Stewart, Shreveport, Louisiana

Hon. J. Machele Sweeting, New York, New York

Hon. Alfreda Talton-Harris, Suffolk, VA

Hon. Lonnie Thompson, Memphis, TN

Hon. Deborah Turner, Cleveland, OH



On **Wednesday**, The Judicial Council hosted its annual Thurgood Marshall Awards Luncheon. The ceremony served to not only reflect on Justice Marshall's "enduring impact, but also recognize the individuals among us who carry his torch forward..." Two current members of the Judicial Council were recognized as well as legendary Civil Rights Attorney Fred Gray. The list of honorees is found below:

Presentation of Awards

The Honorable Brendette Brown Green
The Honorable Sheila Johnson

| | |
|---|---|
| THURGOOD MARSHALL AWARD | The Honorable Judge U. W. Clemon (Ret.) United States District Judge Northern District of Alabama |
| WILLIAM H. HASTIE AWARD | Justice Ralph Cook (Ret.) Alabama Supreme Court State of Alabama |
| CONSTANCE BAKER MOTLEY CHAMPION OF JUSTICE AWARD | The Honorable Kimberly M. Esmond Adams Superior Court of Fulton County, A.J.C. Atlanta, GA |
| THE RAYMOND PACE ALEXANDER AWARD | The Honorable Carole C. Smitherman (Ret.) Jefferson County Circuit Court Birmingham, AL |
| SARA J. HARPER HUMANITARIAN AWARD | The Honorable June C. McKinney Administrative Law Judge Florida Division of Administrative Hearings |
| GEORGE W. CROCKETT, JR. LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD | Attorney Fred Gray Senior Partner Gray, Langford, Sapp, McGowan, Gray et al. Tuskegee, AL |
| CHAIR'S EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE AWARD | Attorney G. Courtney French Founding Partner Petway, French & Ford, LLP Birmingham, AL Attorney Gregory A. Cade Lead Attorney Environmental Litigation Group, P.C. Birmingham, AL Attorney Ryan Palmer Principal Counsel RPPLAW Baltimore, MD |

The ceremony also featured the swearing-in of the 2025-26 Judicial Council Officers and Executive Board Members with the oath administered by The Hon. P. Scott Neville of the Illinois Supreme Court.



Attorney Fred Gray addressing the Judicial Council's Thurgood Marshall Luncheon

Additionally, several Judicial Council Members received various awards during the Convention:



Judge Amanda N. Heath, Superior Court Judge in the Augusta Judicial Circuit of Georgia was honored as a member of the Centennial Class of the National Bar Association's Top 40 under 40: Nation's Best Advocates for 2025. In addition, Judge Heath was also selected as one of the top five Best of the Best in the Centennial Class and received the Excellence in Innovation Award for her work on and off the bench.



Hon. Valerie M. Cartright, NYS Supreme Court Justice, Past Judicial Council Chair **Hon. Cenceria Edwards**, NYS Supreme Court Justice and **Hon. Ann Claire Williams**, US District Court of Northern Illinois received the Outstanding Judiciary Award from the Women Lawyers Division at the Gertrude Rush breakfast.



Several Judicial Council members were inducted into the 2025 Fred D. Gray Hall of Fame on July 31, 2025: Hon. Steven Brister, Hon. Sharon V. Burrell, Hon. Mablean Ephriam, Hon. Marcella Holland, Hon. Gregory E. Jackson, Hon. Denise Langford Morris, and Hon. Monte Watkins. Hon. Cynthia Ayers was inducted posthumously, and Hon L. Clifford Davis was celebrated posthumously for his 100th year.

Several Judicial Council Members and other Judges were recognized as Centennial Lawyers of Distinction including:

Hon. Yvette Alexander, Hon. Dennis Archer, Hon. Robert M. Bell, Hon. Bernice B. Donald, Hon. Cenceria Edwards, Hon Shauna Graves-Robertson, Hon. Brig. Gen. Kenneth Gray, Hon. John Guidry, Hon. L. Priscilla Hall, Hon. Shelvin M.L. Hall, Hon. Shammara H. Henderson, Hon. Arnette R. Hubbard, Hon. Gary M. Jackson, Hon. Teri L. Jackson, Hon. Tommy Jewell, Jr., Hon. Anita Josey-Herring, Hon. Theodore McMillian, Hon. Victor McTeer, Hon. Vanzetta Penn-McPherson, Hon. Tonya W. Pratt, Hon. Peggy A. Quince, Hon. Robert D. Rucker, Hon. Sonya Sacks, Hon. Vaino Spencer, Hon. Ojetta R. Thompson, Hon. Leah Ward-Sears, Hon. Ann C. Williams

ELEVATIONS AND HONORS

News and Notes of Judicial Council Members Being Recognized for their Accomplishments and Advancements over the past year.



The Leon County Courthouse in Tallahassee, FL was renamed the “**Judge Augustus D. Aikens Jr.** Leon County Courthouse” in honor of Judge Aikens, who served on the Leon County Court for 27 years before retiring last November. Judge Aikens was first appointed to the bench in 1997. During his time on the bench, he was instrumental in establishing the Veterans Treatment Court team in 2015 to support veterans with substance abuse and mental illnesses.

Prior to his judgeship, Aikens operated his own practice and worked for the Florida Division of Administrative Services. A 30-year veteran of the United States Army and Florida National Guard, Judge Aikens earned the Bronze Star for his service during Operation Desert Storm and the Legion of Merit Medal for a career of exceptionally meritorious service before retiring with the rank of Colonel.



Hon. Noell Allen was recently named Regional Vice-President of the Association of Administrative Law Judges, the union and professional organization which represents over 1000 judges that adjudicate Social Security disability claims. A member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. she along with Judges Valerie M. Cartwright, T. Diane Greene, and Stephanie Hunter founded the *Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Violette N. Anderson National Judicial Council* in April, honoring the first Black woman to practice before the United States

Supreme Court. A recent contestant on the gameshow, *The Floor*, was also recognized as one of Indianapolis’ Bright and Brightest in Government for 2025.

Prior to her 2017 appointment as an ALJ with the Social Security Administration, Judge Allen served as an Administrative Law Judge with the Indiana Civil Rights Commission for three years as well as a previous stint for five years as an ALJ with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.



Hon. Romonda D. Belcher, ret., & Hon. Odell McGhee, ret. were amongst the recipients of the National Bar Association's Gertrude Rush Award, conferred in Des Moines, IA in March of 2025. In 2010, Judge Belcher became the first Black woman to serve as a judge in the state of Iowa when she was named to the Fifth Judicial District as an Associate Judge after 15 years of service as a County Attorney. She was also named Drake Law School Alumna of the Year, an award recognizing her outstanding service to the legal profession, the community, and the Law School in 2024. Judge McGhee, a Past President of the National Bar Association, also served on the Fifth Judicial Circuit from his appointment in 2002 until his retirement in 2020. He was the first African American elected

president of the Iowa Judges Association. He also served as president of the Iowa National Bar Association for more than 10 years and was instrumental in the creation of "A Monumental Journal," a public art project dedicated to the founders of the National Bar Association in Des Moines.



Judge Andrea M. Buford was named the Acting Presiding Judge of the Child Protection Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County in January 2025. She is also the recipient of the Impact of the Year Award from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, presented at the 11th annual Justice Innovation Awards ceremony in Chicago during the NCJFCJ's 88th Annual Conference.

Judge Buford was appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court in April 2013. She has previously served as Chair of the Special Supreme Court Committee on Juvenile Courts and is currently on the Supreme Court Committee on Equality, the

Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility and the Illinois Supreme Court Judicial College, Committee on Guardians Ad Litem.

Prior to joining the bench, Judge Buford focused her practice primarily on civil defense litigation, representing corporations and municipalities. She has served as president of the Cook County Bar Association, president of the Cook County Bar Association Foundation, President of the Illinois Judicial Council and Economic Development Chair for the NAACP.



Judge Tanita Cain has been named a 2025 Birmingham Business Journal "Women to Watch"! Judge Cain will be honored on September 26, 2025 as part of the Birmingham Business Journal's Women's Summit. Appointed as a District Judge for Jefferson County's Place 6 in 2022, Judge Cain was chosen as one of Birmingham's top women on the verge of big things to watch for exemplary service in the community and on the bench. She will also be featured in the BBJ monthly magazine.



Hon. Andrew L. Dixon, III was named the Acting Hearing Office Chief Administrative Law Judge (HOCALJ) for the Greenville, SC Hearing Office of the Social Security Administration in January 2025. He is serving in this role simultaneously with his position as the permanent HOCALJ for the Tallahassee, FL Hearing Office which he assumed in August 2023. In this role he manages two offices consisting of over 60 combined judges, attorneys, managers and support staff.

In March 2025, Judge Dixon was included on the *Judicial Wall of Honor*, celebrating alumni of the St. Thomas University's Ben Crump School of Law (Miami Gardens, FL) who have served as judges. Judge Dixon will celebrate 15 years as an Administrative Law Judge in Tallahassee at the end of August following service as an Assistant State Attorney in Ft. Lauderdale, FL and an Attorney-Advisor with the Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals in Miami, FL.



The Montgomery County Courthouse in Montgomery, AL dedicated its Conference Suite in honor of **Judge Johnny Hardwick** upon the occasion of his retirement in March. Judge Hardwick, a past Chair of the Judicial Council, retired after 23 years of service as a Judge in Montgomery's Fifteenth Circuit Court. He previously served as an assistant United States attorney, a special deputy attorney general for the state of Alabama, and a municipal court judge for the city of Montgomery and the town of White Hall.

Judge Hardwick is a Past Secretary and President of the Alabama Association of Circuit Court Judges, a Past President of the Capital City Bar Association; and Vice Chair of the Montgomery County Democratic Conference; as well as a founding member and Past President of the Greater Montgomery Chapter of 100 Black Men.



Hon. Deborah Means Henderson is amongst the recipients of the 2025 Pillars of Excellence Law Alumni Awards given by the University of Memphis Law School. Judge Henderson, who sits on the General Sessions Court in Shelby County, Tennessee was previously honored with the Leon Ruben Award for Excellence at the fall Tennessee General Sessions Judges Conference in 2024. This honor is awarded to jurists who distinguish themselves through their outstanding service to the community, the conference and the judiciary; in her case, Judge Henderson worked County Commission to establish a pre-litigation eviction mediation program to work through disputes between landlords and tenants. Prior to appointment to the bench, she spent 16 years in private practice with an emphasis in domestic relations, probate and juvenile law, served on the juvenile defender staff for Memphis and Shelby County and was a special master for the chancery court.



Judge David Hobdy was inducted into the Alabama Lawyers Association Hall of Fame in March alongside Judges Marvin Wiggins, and W. Troy Massey as well as attorney William Pompey at a ceremony featuring a keynote address by Judge Tiffany McCord.

Judge Hobdy has served as a Circuit Judge in the 10th Judicial Circuit Bessemer since 2011 and as a municipal court judge for five years preceding his current post. He is now the Chair-Elect of the Judicial Council.



Hon. John A. Houston who serves as a Senior judge for the United States District Court for the Southern District of California has received several recent honors. In May, he was recognized as the 2025 San Diego County Bar Association's 'Outstanding Jurist'. Also, in May, the Pan Asian Lawyers of the San Diego Bar Association bestowed upon him its 2025 Living Legacy Award" at its 47th Annual Dinner. Last year, the Earl B Gilliam Bar Association in San Diego County re-named its Living Legend Award (an award he won in 2013) the "Honorable John A. Houston Living Legend Award" in his honor.

The recipient of the NBA Judicial Council's "13th Annual A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. Award" in 2014, Judge Houston assumed Senior Status in 2018 after serving on the District Court of San Diego for 15 years and as a magistrate for five years prior to that. Prior to assuming the bench, he served in the Army's Judge Advocate General Corps and as an Assistant US Attorney for the Southern District of California.



Judge Gary M. Jackson (ret.) authored an excellent article on the history of the Sam Cary Bar Association of which he was one of the founders. The article, entitled ["The Sam Cary Bar Association: Colorado's Vanguard for Black Attorneys"](#) published on the "History Colorado" website highlighted the many challenges faced by Black lawyers in Colorado in the early 70s, a historical perspective of both Samuel Cary and the National Bar Association (from which the Sam Cary Bar Association drew its inspiration). "The Sam Cary Bar Association became the vanguard organization in advancing

the need for more lawyers of color and women attorneys in the state of Colorado. We came together to create a bar to expand our influence—not through separation but through our need for inclusiveness and equity in the legal profession."

Judge Jackson, who retired in 2020, presided in the Criminal and General Session Divisions of the Denver County Court. He was inducted into the NBA's Fred Gray Hall of Fame in 2021, and his accolades include the National Bar Association's Wiley A. Branton Award, the Order of the Coif from CU Law School, the Colorado Bar Association's Award of Merit, the National Black District Attorney's Association Norman Early Founder's Award.



The **Honorable Judge Tamara Johnson** was the recipient of the prestigious Maud McClure Kelly Award on July 17, 2025 at the Alabama State Bar's Annual Meeting. The award recognized Judge Johnson for the lasting impact she has made on the legal profession in Alabama and for being a pioneer and a female leader within the State. She is also the first Black woman to receive the Birmingham Bar Association Lifetime Achievement Award, presented in 2023.



The City of Chesapeake (VA) has renamed and will rededicate its court complex in honor of **Judge Eileen Olds** (ret.) The dedication will take place on September 4, 2025. Judge Olds, a former Thurgood Marshall Award recipient of the N.B.A. and President of the National Judges Association, made history in 1995 when she became the first woman and first African American judge in the First Judicial District of Virginia to preside over Chesapeake Juvenile and Domestic Relations cases. Judge Olds served on the bench for 24 years before retiring in 2019. Prior to assuming the bench, she represented the State Department of Highways and Transportation and handled criminal and family matters in private practice.



Justice Peggy A. Quince (Ret.) the first Black Woman to lead the Florida Supreme Court, received the Florida Bar Association Selig I. Goldin Memorial Award, the Criminal Law Section's highest honor, at the Florida Bar Convention in June. Introduced by Judge June McKinney, Justice Quince reminded the audience that she has been a member of the Criminal Law Section since in 1980 and urged audience members to aspire to Goldin's example to "make sure that our criminal justice system survives." Justice Quince, a former Chair of the Judicial Council, was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in 1998, served as Chief Justice for two years before retiring in 2019.



Judge Betty W. Sanders (ret.) was inducted into the University of Mississippi Law School Hall of Fame in March 2025. Judge Sanders was the first African American elected as Circuit Court Judge for Post 3 in Mississippi's Fourth Judicial District and became the state's first African American circuit court magistrate judge.

Judge Sanders served 20 years as a Circuit Judge in the Mississippi Delta before retiring in 2014, though she continued to serve as a senior status judge. She was named a Mississippi Bar Foundation Fellow, which is the foundation's highest honor. Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael Randolph presented her with the 2023 Chief Justice Award in recognition of her accomplishments and service.



Judge David St. Pierre was recently featured by the Provincial Court of British Columbia in an [article on its website](#) detailing his career and describing him as a “model, mentor and inspiration for young people, particularly for racialized minority students, in part because he has spoken so openly about his own background and the challenges faced by Black people in western Canada.”

The article detailed his upbringing in his native Vancouver, his pre-law career as a musician, the inspiration for his legal career and ultimately his appointment as a Provincial Court judge in 2009. Judge St. Pierre has served as on the executive of the BC Provincial Court Judges’ Association, as its president, and as a committee chair for many years. He has also been a guest instructor at the Allard School of Law and helped establish the St. Pierre, Romilly, Nathanson Entrance Award in Law for Black Students at his alma mater.



Judge J. Machel Sweeting, recently elected to another 10-year term on the Manhattan 10th Municipal Court District of the New York City Civil Court New York County, was inducted into the Hall of Distinguished Alumni of Davidson College in November 2024. She is the school’s only female graduate to become a judge in the college’s 188-year history. A paving stone in New York City’s Central Park was named in her honor as well. In 2025, she received the NAACP Woman of Excellence award and a chair in my name was placed inside the New York public library in recognition of her continuing efforts to promote

literacy for adults and children.

Judge Sweeting is the first and only legal practitioner admitted to practice law in New York State (including the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York), Washington DC, the United States Supreme Court, the 2nd and 4th Circuit Courts of Appeal, and the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

IN MEMORIAM

REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE
JOINED THE ANCESTORS



Hon. Sara J. Harper, the first woman to serve as Chair of the Judicial Council and an inductee of the National Bar Association Hall of Fame, passed away on July 8, 2025, days short of her 99th birthday.

She became the first Black woman to graduate from Western Reserve University College of Law in 1952, two years before the landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education.

In 1970, Governor James Rhodes appointed her to a seat on the Cleveland Municipal Court, making her the second Black woman judge in Ohio, following Judge Lillian E. Burke, who had been appointed in 1969. Judge Harper would serve with distinction on the Cleveland Municipal Court until 1990, when she was elected to the Eighth District Court of Appeals along with Judge Patricia Anne Blackmon, making them the first two Black women to sit on a Court of Appeals in Ohio.

She served concurrently on the municipal court with her husband, Judge George W. Trumbo, making them the only Black husband and wife duo to serve as judges in the State of Ohio. She and Judge Trumbo were married for 64 years until he passed away in 2014.

Judge Harper was the first Black woman to sit by assignment on the Ohio Supreme Court. In 1972, President Richard Nixon commissioned her to the United States Marine Corp to

become the first female military judge in the history of the Marine Corp. She served with distinction until her retirement in 1986.

Judge Harper also served as president of the Cleveland NAACP from 1982- 1985 and founded the Stay in School Project, which in eight years enrolled over 17,000 students in local schools and distributed \$150,000 in U.S. Saving Bonds for perfect attendance and academic achievement. The Sara J. Harper Library opened in the 1990s in the Outhwaite neighborhood where she grew up. Funeral services were held on Friday, July 18, 2025 in Cleveland, OH.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**2025-2026
NBA JUDICIAL
COUNCIL
CALENDAR**


**36TH WILEY A. BRANTON
SYMPOSIUM**
NEW YORK CITY, NY
OCTOBER 16-OCTOBER 18, 2025

MID-WINTER MEETING
ANTIGUA
JANUARY 14 - JANUARY 19, 2026

**46TH ANNUAL MID-YEAR
CONFERENCE (GERTRUDE
RUSH)**
SAN DIEGO, CA
MARCH 26- MARCH 29, 2026

**95TH ANNUAL NBA
CONVENTION**
NASHVILLE, TN
JULY 26-AUGUST 1, 2026

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

The seal of The Judicial Council of the National Bar Association is circular. It features a central figure of a woman holding a scale of justice. The text "THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL" is at the top and "NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION" is at the bottom. The words "FOUNDED 1919" and "CITY NEW YORK" are also visible.