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President's Column

John Conery

It is not the critic who counts; nor the one who points out how the strong person stumbled, or where the doer of a deed could have been better. The credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena; . . . who strives valiantly; . . . who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at worst, if he or she fails, at least fails while daring greatly.”—Theodore Roosevelt, *The Man in the Arena: Citizenship in a Republic*.

I am humbled and thankful that our fellow AJA members have elected me to be your “Man in the Arena” this year. In a sense, the minute we take our oath of office as judges, all of us are immediately “in the arena” of public scrutiny. Our motto at AJA is “Making Better Judges®,” and we hope that this year we can help you better withstand that public scrutiny as we help each other shine and sparkle while toiling in the “arena” of our courtrooms and chambers. Many times our decisions require great courage, other times we are required to exercise great patience; sometimes compassion is called for, and at other times, we must stand firm. But at all times, we must treat all who appear in the judicial “arena” with fairness and dignity to better serve the ends of justice.

To that end, former AJA presidents Kevin Burke and Steve Leben have been working for years to promote the concept of “Procedural Fairness.” Both have written great articles in this and other publications, and have presented at many judicial conferences in the United States and Canada, explaining those concepts to all in attendance. This year Kevin and Steve were joined by my immediate predecessor as AJA president, Brian MacKenzie, as together they presented a unique perspective on “Procedural Fairness and Drug Treatment Courts” at our Seattle conference.

We were especially fortunate to have partnered with the Washington State Judiciary and the National Association of State Judicial Educators (NASJE) in Seattle. Special thanks to

our Washington judges and AJA officers, Catherine Shaffer and Richard Kayne, who worked closely with colleagues from the Washington judiciary and NASJE to present one of our best education programs ever! Special thanks to the State Justice Institute for a grant used to help defray our costs.

We cannot all attend our national conferences, where we can receive inspiring instruction from colleagues like Kevin, Steve, and Brian, hear dynamic speakers such as Nicole Austin-Hillery, or sit in awe as Dean Erwin Chemerinsky presents his

superb annual review of recent developments from the United States Supreme Court. For those who cannot attend our conferences, membership in AJA still comes with special advantages. We have the ability through our AJA website to access the many wonderful articles and materials presented at our conferences. We all have the ability to network through our electronic offerings. We can still reap the benefits of the knowledge of our colleagues’ “Best Practices”

and learn more about the issues of concern to all of us through *Court Review*, our quarterly publication sent to all AJA members.

Periodically, you will also receive an e-mail publication we call “The Rundown.” As your president, I hope to keep you informed of all of our activities conducted on your behalf throughout the year. We at AJA want to be there for you as together we work at Making Better Judges®.

Please make a special effort to join us at our midyear conference scheduled in Santa Fe, New Mexico, from April 19-22, 2016. Come with us to Toronto September 25-30, 2016, as we join our Canadian counterparts at what promises to be another great annual conference! Our president-elect, Judge Russell Otter from Toronto, promises that you will not leave disappointed.

Join us in the worthy cause of Making Better Judges® as we toil together in the judicial arena! Together, let us help each other achieve the triumph of high achievement by becoming better judges.

