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President's Column

Catherine Shaffer

My dear colleagues and fellow *Court Review* readers, greetings.

In my last column, I told you about AJA's wonderful Cleveland conference in September, ably planned by our own Judges Michael Cicconetti, Eugene Lucci, and Gayle Williams-Byers. There, our past AJA Presidents also met and identified a key priority for AJA—enhancing the value of membership for members who are unable to attend conferences. This is the first of my three overlapping priorities for my term as AJA President. My second is to build on AJA's advances toward furthering diversity in our organization and on the bench, while helping us all achieve better understanding of and responses to diversity issues in our courts. The third is to strengthen AJA's ties to other national court-oriented organizations, reach out to national minority-lawyer organizations with judicial divisions, and find new ways to collaborate with our national court-oriented partners.

To carry out these goals, I asked AJA members to sign up for the committees that interest them. Everyone who did that got an email appointing them to their committee and suggesting that their committee zero in on and work to achieve two or three objectives to build AJA membership value for members who do not come to conference. Committee meetings are underway. It is not too late to sign up.

I also talked recently to our national partner representatives. After excellent talks with Benes Aldana, the president of the National Judicial College (NJC), there are now 10 scholarships, for \$500 each, available to AJA members who want to attend an NJC course. AJA has been invited to send a representative as an "observer," tuition free, to one of the 2018 classes on "Advanced Procedural Fairness" (one held in January and a second set for September in Anchorage). AJA will co-sponsor and plan with NJC a joint event aimed at continuing the national conversation on race. The AJA president will be invited to address the NJC's General Jurisdiction classes. NJC is distributing our membership literature at the college. AJA may support with NJC a 2019 Judicial Academy for lawyers interested in the bench. And NJC is cooperating with a presentation of one of our Hawai'i educational programs and considering possible co-location of an NJC course with a future AJA conference.

I also talked with the current presidents of the National Association for Court Management, the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), and the National Association of State Judicial Educators, all longstanding partners of AJA, about potential for future closer collaboration. All three organizations seem very receptive to making their ties with us even closer.

I was honored to represent AJA at the Rehnquist Awards event on November 16 in Washington, D.C. Our own Judge

Elizabeth Hines, a longtime National Center for State Courts board member, was there and introduced me. Attendees stayed at the historic Willard Hotel and were hosted by Chief Justice John Roberts at the United States Supreme Court for the awards dinner. This year's award winner was the Honorable Kim Berkeley Clark of the Allegheny County (Pa.) Court of Common Pleas. Her practice as a judge exemplifies AJA's signature initiative, procedural fairness. Her wonderful acceptance speech will be reprinted in a future edition of *Court Review*.

In late November, I went to the COSCA mid-year meeting in New Orleans. This conference was highlighted by educational programs on developments in court technology and data management,

on responding to emerging disruptive technologies like neuroscience, block chaining, robotics, and virtual reality, on understanding and responding to opiate addiction, and on techniques to handle judicial- and court- leadership challenges. Another conference highlight was the reception in the Louisiana Supreme Court, also the seat of the Louisiana Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, for which the chief judge is none other than AJA past president James F McKay.

Much more is coming up in 2018. Our executive committee met in January in Napa, California, a possible venue for a future spring AJA conference. This year's AJA midyear conference is from April 19 to 21 in Memphis—at the Guest House at Graceland. Judge Betty Moore and Justice Robert Torres have nailed down a fantastic education program, which will include presentations on judicial ethics, courthouse security, using reflective practices in judging, and a forensic look at the cold case of Elbert Williams. Outstanding planned events include a "Barbecue Feast" at Alfred's on Beale Street.

In September 2018, we will enjoy our fall conference in Kuaui. Judge Catherine Carlson and Justice Torres have this event fully planned. Reserve your calendars to visit this beautiful Hawaiian garden island! In September 2019, we will be in Chicago, and our conference will be in partnership with the Illinois state courts. The spring 2020 midyear will be in gorgeous Savannah, Georgia. Tentatively we are planning for Philadelphia, another historic venue, in fall 2020.

Now is the time to reach out to courts in these areas to plan together in advance. Can you help? Please think about your ability to connect us to court organizations and court-oriented organizations in which you participate, for future collaboration to begin. We need you, and your knowledge, passion, and engagement.

I look forward to seeing your contributions, to hearing from you, and to seeing many of you at upcoming conferences. And I wish you a wonderful and productive 2018.

