

THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

COURTS, COMMUNITY AND RULE OF LAW COMMITTEE

2023 ACTIVITY REPORT



June 11, 2024

Third Judicial Circuit Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee 2023 Activity Report

The governing body of the federal courts, the Judicial Conference of the United States, “affirmed that civics education is a core component of judicial service; endorsed regularly-held conferences to share and promote best practices of civics education; and encouraged circuits to coordinate and promote education programs.” The Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee for the Third Judicial Circuit is proud to be part of the judiciary’s national initiative to present and promote civics education programs. The Third Circuit Committee had another busy year in 2023. This Activity Report highlights some of the initiatives that our judges and court staff participated in throughout the year as part of the Committee’s ongoing effort to connect our courts to communities throughout the Circuit and to improve understanding of the role of the judicial system in our democracy.

ADULT CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Since the first course on adult civics education premiered at the Community College of Philadelphia in Fall 2019, this CCRL initiative has been repeated 3 more semesters at the CCP (Spring 2021, Spring 2022, Fall 2023). Not even the shutdowns of the Covid 19 pandemic could keep this course under wraps, thanks to Zoom technology. Many thanks to our course presenters in 2023 for keeping the interest in Judicial and civics education alive and thriving:

Introduction to Federal Courts - Separation of Powers, Judiciary Act, Rule of Law presented by Judge Cynthia M. Rufe, Chief Bankruptcy Judge Magdeline Coleman, and Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Hey

Comparison of Federal and State Court Systems presented by Judge Cheryl Ann Krause and Judge Susan Gantman

Labor, Employment and Discrimination Law presented by the late Judge Gene E.K. Pratter

Fourth Amendment, Search and Seizure, Criminal Law presented by Judge Theodore McKee

Immigration Law presented by Judge L. Felipe Restrepo

Judicial Independence presented by Judge Karen Marston

First Amendment presented by Judge Larry Stengel (retired)

14th Amendment and Due Process presented by Judge Gerald McHugh

“How Do Judges Make Decisions” Conversation with Judges Marjorie O. Rendell and Theodore McKee

With great enthusiasm, the course reached the Bucks County Community College in Bucks County where leaders of the local Bar Association worked with Judge Rufe to create a course for Spring 2024. Interest from other courts and counties will keep this creative and flexible curriculum popular. Many thanks to the judges and presenters who volunteer their time and expertise, and to the members of the Bar who support and participate. This is a program that also requires an engaged and committed college, and the CCP and the BCCC have both proven to be stellar examples.

The CCRL Committee looks forward to spreading the enthusiasm for this course throughout the Circuit.

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER (“NCC”) PROGRAMS

Volunteer judges from the Court of Appeals, and District, Magistrate and Bankruptcy Courts in Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey continue their strong participation in the NCC’s *“Judge Chats Program.”* This program offers regularly scheduled monthly events in which judges, in thirty-minute sessions, meet with classes of students, ranging from the elementary through high school levels, for discussions between the judge and the students surrounding Constitutional questions. An NCC educator acts as moderator and facilitates the discussion. In 2023, our judicial volunteers covered over eighty (80) Constitutional Ambassador programs with students. Notably, those volunteers continue to participate in many programs hosted by the NCC in conjunction with Civic Holidays such as Law Day and Constitution Day. In addition, the late Judge Gene Pratter participated in the Girl Scouts Program held on a Saturday in April of 2023 and Judge Kent Jordan also volunteered on a Saturday for the 2023 Boy Scouts of America Program with over 150 scouts in attendance.

ESSAY CONTEST

The *Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Third Circuit* hosted its 2nd Annual Third Circuit Essay Contest in 2023. The essay contest was open to all 5th and 6th Grade classes in their Districts. This class essay project called upon participating classes to work together in writing a class essay which addressed the question: “Why the Right to Vote is Important to Me and to Our Country.” Essays were submitted before a March 31st deadline. Classes that submitted the best essays in each district (Delaware,

New Jersey, EDPA, MDPa, WDPa, and the District of the Virgin Islands) of the Third Circuit were invited to one of the courthouses in the Third Circuit to present their essays during the first weeks in May in celebration of Law Day. The essays and presentations were evaluated based on focus, content development, organization and style. The Committee will host its 3rd Annual Essay Contest in 2024.

REPORTS BY DISTRICT

Eastern District of Pennsylvania (EDPA)

- The EDPA solicited and reviewed twenty-four class entries in the Third Circuit 2023 Essay Contest for 5th and 6th grade classes in our District. We held an awards ceremony in the Ceremonial Courtroom of the Byrne Courthouse in Philadelphia during May's Law Week honoring the three winning essays and recognizing each of the participants. We followed the awards ceremony with a luncheon for the stakeholders in our community outreach, including the President Judges and Court Administrators/Jury Administrator for each County, the Bar Associations' Presidents/Chancellor, Executive Directors, and Federal Practice Chairs, community college representatives, college professors participating in our mock sentencing exercise, and several members of the County Intermediate Units.
- We greatly expanded our outreach to the Bar across eight of the nine counties (other than Lancaster). Our colleagues presented continuing legal education on a regular basis with considerable credit to each one for taking time to appear both live and virtually across the District. The Pennsylvania CLE Board Bar estimates over 250 teaching hours were invested by members of our Court in 2023 Bar-sponsored CLE.
- Our three working groups met five times in conference calls and during our May luncheon and October dinner. The groups made progress focusing on the primacy of law and judicial independence for: grade schools and secondary schools; college and adult programs; and, in conjunction with increasing jury awareness and participation. Representatives from our Court of Appeals, our Court, state courts in most of the nine counties, US Attorney, Pennsylvania Attorney General, Pennsylvania and local Bars, community colleges, intermediate units, and affinity groups offered thoughtful suggestions continue to work through the three working groups in bi-monthly sessions. Their suggestions resulted in sessions in several secondary schools and meeting with primary and secondary students across the District in their classrooms, our Courtrooms, and in working with the Judge Chats program and the Rendell Center.
- Our Working Group on jury awareness and participation began efforts with the Court's Jury Committee in expanding the role of the Court and Bar in promoting jury diversity and participation.

- We met with one judge from each Circuit during an immersive two day roundtable sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation Trust and Annenberg Public Policy Center on Civics and the Courts in conjunction with the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts. We expect several initiatives over the next six months as pilots in our District and in reviewing efforts in each District.
- We are working to offer support with our working groups and the Pennsylvania Bar Association in introducing an “Adopt a School program” through contacts in the young lawyer’s divisions and our committee members in the Intermediate Units to create a more direct contact with members of our Court’s Bar;
- We began first steps to present either live civil oral arguments or mock oral arguments patterned on the United States national models into our high schools and will work directly with the Intermediate Units to bring this opportunity directly to them;
- We continue partnerships with our committee members in the Penn Carey outreach, [Jack and Jill of America, Inc. \(through Judge Hodge\), United States Attorneys \(through Ebony Wortham, Esq.\), Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts, and our Court’s robust Historical Society.](#)
- We expanded the mock sentencing exercise for college students with hypothetical presentence reports in conjunction with Judge Restrepo, the probation office, the United States Attorney, the Federal Defender’s Office, and the Conference of Criminal Justice and Social Work College Professors. Five judges from the Western District worked with us to preside over mock sentencing presented by university students in western Pennsylvania. We met with the MidAtlantic Association of Criminal Justice Professors in Williamsport resulting in our model being copied with our guidance in other states. The Pennsylvania Bar expanding its marketing of the exercise. Several professors across the Commonwealth used our YouTube video mock sentencing in their Fall classes. We led the mock sentencing exercises in October and November with particular thanks to Judge Gallagher in Allentown and our colleagues in Philadelphia. We expect to update the hypotheticals this summer for use next Fall.
- Several judges participated in virtual high school mock trials supplementing efforts across the Commonwealth and in mock appellate arguments in the law schools.
- We met with the Directors of the Intermediate Units, as well as senior members of the Philadelphia School District, to establish pathways to bring more students into our Courthouses consistent with Judge Rufe’s longstanding initiatives and in conjunction with efforts through the Rendell Center.
- We continue to circulate information on the Court’s community outreach through our active X feed (@PAED_outreach) highlighting our past community outreach efforts as a Court

across the District. Most of our followers are educators or members of the Bar active in their communities. Many District Courts and the AO follow our feed and regularly repost our efforts to their communities. Our protocols, having been approved by the Marshal and the AO, are now being adopted by Districts across the Country.

- Our Court played a leading role along with the Pennsylvania Bar in bringing federal practice lessons through documentaries into the high school senior classes across the Commonwealth including in a documentary film *Youth v. Gov* presented by Teen Screen in conjunction with non-profit Film Pittsburgh.
- We again welcomed Italian judges and lawyers through Judges Padova and Rufe.
- We welcomed representatives of The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn along with the President of the American Inns of Court.
- We welcomed a Ukraine delegation of judges and legal experts as part of the World Leadership Center Program.
- Several judges hosted summer international interns in their Chambers as part of our rule of law outreach efforts. We ask any judges who would like to host an intern for Summer 2024 to please contact us. We are presently reviewing applications.
- Two representatives from our Clerk's Office participate in monthly national conferences managed by the AO on outreach initiatives in all Districts.

Western District of Pennsylvania (WDPA)

The Western District of Pennsylvania continued its community outreach activities in full force. While we continue to conduct programs with bar associations and legal groups throughout the District, we have limited the list below to outreach beyond the profession.

In 2023, in addition to participating in the Circuit-wide essay contest, hosting 13 naturalization programs, hosting our annual history programs and continuing our Court art exhibition program, our Court welcomed and visited with groups of all ages to spread knowledge of the federal judiciary and the importance of the rule of law. Below is a summary of some of our Court's activities:

- Virtually hosted hundreds of students of all grade levels for our Court's (now annual) Bill of Rights Day naturalization program. Participants heard from newly naturalized citizens about their journeys to, and the importance of, American

citizenship, as well as the differences between their countries and the United States. The Court shared the importance of the Bill of Rights to our democratic system and to the rule of law. Notably, the participants in our program were from the outer reaches of our District (see attached). Many of the schools would not have readily been able to travel to any of our courthouses to experience such an event in person either due to distance or resources.

- In conjunction with the Rule of Law Program at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, our federal and state judges lead a Roundtable Discussion on the Rule of Law and Democracy at our courthouse where they were joined by Rule of Law Scholars from Ukraine and Afghanistan studying at the University of Pittsburgh.
- Hosted a program in both our Pittsburgh and Johnstown divisions for area college students, focusing on federal sentencing and the criminal justice system.
- Hosted the University of Pittsburgh's OSHER life-long learning program for a session with older learners on the federal courts during which a judge, the Federal Public Defender's Office, the US Attorney's Office and the US Probation Office discussed issues of jurisdiction, case loads, the media and challenges facing our court system.
- Hosted a Roadways to the Bench program. The program is geared toward lawyers and law students with a particular focus on expanding the pipeline of potential bankruptcy and magistrate judges.
- Our judges hosted and visited (in person and virtually) numerous elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges and law schools throughout the year, both within the Commonwealth and nationally, to judge competitions and to discuss issues of law and justice, careers and the federal court system.
- The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania is pleased to report that, with new membership and ideas, the Court's community outreach committee has been working hard to develop new programs for different areas of need within the community and revitalize previously established programs.
- Financial Literacy for Immigrants: Among the newly developed programs are financial literacy presentations specifically focused on assisting immigrants. The first presentation took place on December 13, 2023, with the non-profit organization HelloNeighbor for Afghanistan immigrants. The committee has been

actively contacting other organizations and anticipates expanding this program to reach many other immigrant groups in need.

- Financial Literacy for Veterans and Armed Forces: In 2023, a program was developed to assist veterans and the armed forces. Although a presentation was not able to be scheduled in 2023, the committee was diligently contacting various organizations to schedule financial literacy presentations for these groups. The first presentation will be in coordination with the Duquesne School of Law Veterans Clinic on April 3, 2024. Additional presentations in coordination with other organizations are anticipated for future reports.
- Student and Youth Outreach Activities: On September 20, 2023, Judge Melaragno participated in the Federal Government Panel for the Youth Civic Engagement Symposium in Erie. The event was put on by Erie Together and Gannon University for Constitution Day.
- In 2023, the Court was also working with the committee to revitalize one of its most successful programs, a half-day financial literacy program for high school students. Unfortunately, the program could not be scheduled in 2023; however, the Court is happy to report that “Credit & the Bankruptcy Court: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Student Finances” will be held on April 5, 2024, with approximately 80 students participating. This program is anticipated to be an annual event once again.
- In the fall of 2023, Judge Taddonio’s law clerks visited the University of Pittsburgh School of Law to speak to students about internships and clerkships. This offered law students the opportunity to ask questions about the internships offered by the Court as well as to gain insight into the job of a law clerk.
- The Court continues to offer internship opportunities year-round for local students to gain valuable, practical experience and access to a unique perspective from inside Chambers. Although these internships are typically offered to law students, the Court has accepted local college students for these opportunities as well. At this time, Judge Böhm is coordinating with Washington & Jefferson College to provide such an internship.
- JOINED Program: In the summer of 2023, for the first time, the Clerk’s Office conducted the Judicial Outreach Initiative Encouraging Diversity (JOINED) Program. The goal of the JOINED Program is to attract new talent and encourage age, disability, racial, ethnic and gender diversity in the federal court system by providing individuals with firsthand experience working with the Bankruptcy

Judges and court employees. The JOINED Program is structured around two primary tracks: Volunteer Internships and Paid Summer Employment.

- Mentorship Opportunities in the summer of 2023: Judge Böhm offered a volunteer opportunity to a young attorney from Afghanistan who is seeking asylum in the United States. This not only provided a valuable learning experience but a mentorship opportunity as well.
- Brown Bag Lunches with the Bankruptcy Judges: The Court continues to host Brown Bag Lunches with the Bankruptcy Judges to provide a forum for questions regarding process, procedure, and overall uniformity of the Court. These events are typically held twice a year and are well attended by attorneys and their staff. The last event was held on October 30, 2023, and the next Brown Bag Lunch is scheduled on April 19, 2024.
- The Judges continued to conduct naturalization ceremonies throughout 2023.

District of Delaware (D.Del.)

- The Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee of the Judicial Council of the Third Circuit hosted its annual essay contest for 4th through 7th grade classes focused on civics, citizenship and the concept of the “Right to Vote.” The essay prompt was: “Why the right to vote is important to me and to our country.” The winning contest entries were selected by a Judges Committee including District Judge Maryellen Noreika, Magistrate Judges Sherry Fallon, Christopher Burke and Jennifer Hall, and Bankruptcy Judge Kate Stickles. On Law Day, May 1, 2023, the District Court held a public ceremony in Judge Noreika’s courtroom where the students from each of the four winning classes read their respective essays. Judge Noreika, Bankruptcy Judge Stickles and Magistrate Judge Fallon awarded the certificates for the winning entries and presented congratulatory remarks to the students on the excellent quality of the submissions and the impressive presentations by the student speakers. All essay submissions were outstanding and reflected the thoughtfulness and effort the students and teachers dedicated to the contest. Winning submissions were selected from the following schools: The Thomas A. Edison Charter School of Wilmington (7th Grade), Cooke Elementary School (5th Grade), William Henry Middle School (5th Grade), and Saint Peter Cathedral School (5th Grade).

- On May 16, 2023, District Judge Maryellen Noreika and Magistrate Judge Sherry Fallon hosted a program for ten students from the Howard High School of Technology in Wilmington. The students are enrolled in a Legal Administrative Studies curriculum and are interested in learning more about careers in the law, law enforcement and the courts.

The students had the opportunity to tour the courthouse and participate in an interactive program with members of the United States Marshals Office, Randall Lohan the Clerk of the District Court, Debra Bonselaar the District Court Jury Administrator, and Diana Welham the Judicial Assistant to Judge Noreika.

- On December 6, 2023, District Judge Maryellen Noreika and Magistrate Judge Sherry Fallon welcomed approximately seventy students in the fifth through eighth grades from Serviam Girls Academy and Nativity Prep School to perform a mock trial in the case of “The Village of Greenville v. Goldie Locks.” The students performed the role of attorneys, witnesses and jurors. The mock trial included opening statements, examination of witnesses and juror deliberations.

- In keeping with the observance of Bill of Rights Day, on December 7, 2023, Judge Maryellen Noreika presided at a Naturalization Ceremony and hosted a group of 12 students from the Howard High School of Technology, along with their school administrator and a chaperone, who observed the ceremony. Nineteen new citizens from fourteen different countries took the oath of citizenship. The guest speaker was Andrea Flores Cornejo, a Victims’ Compensation Assistance Program investigator from the Delaware Department of Justice. After the ceremony, the students had the opportunity to pose questions to Ms. Cornejo, take photographs, sit on the bench and take turns presiding with the gavel. They had a very positive experience and invited the speaker, Ms. Cornejo, to visit their high school so she could speak to more of the students.

District of the Virgin Islands (D.V.I.)

The District Court of the Virgin Islands has a well-established reputation of service to the people of the Virgin Islands. Listed below are the various community activities of the Court during 2023.

- **Annual District Conference** - The District Court of the Virgin Islands’ *Thirteenth Annual District Conference—Access to Justice: Raising the Bar*, was held on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at the University of the Virgin Islands’ Sports and Fitness Center on St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. In total, over 200 attendees participated. This conference is the Territory’s single largest legal seminar. The event is hosted free of charge to registrants and provides Continuing Legal Education credits to members of the Bar. The Keynote Speaker for the Conference was J. Wyndal Gordon, Esq., a trial attorney who practices in Maryland and Washington, D.C. Attorney Gordon frequently serves as a news commentator for various cable networks and podcasts, both nationally and internationally. Known as “The Warrior Lawyer,” Attorney Gordon has also served as an advocate for non-profit organizations that focus on African Americans, children,

and vulnerable populations. Highlights of the program also included presentations from other well-respected members of the legal community. The Court is pleased that two of our veteran presenters—Dean Erwin Chemerinsky and Professor Laurie L. Levenson—returned, while we welcomed new participants. Dean Chemerinsky presented the “Supreme Court Round-Up” and Professor Levenson addressed “Ethics and Professional Responsibility.” Mississippi attorney Carlos E. Moore and local attorney Venetia H. Velázquez presented on “Legal Writing & Effective Persuasion.” Former Chief Judge of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania James T. Giles and local attorneys Pamela Lynn Colon and Andrew Capdeville discussed “Effective Settlement Techniques.”

- **Brown Bag Luncheons** - Each year the Court hosts quarterly luncheons known as Brown Bag Luncheons. The Brown Bag Luncheons are informal opportunities for participating members of the District Court bar to meet with judges and fellow attorneys regarding legal issues pertinent to our district. The one-hour meetings are facilitated by the District and Magistrate Judges and Clerk of Court and include agenda items and presentations from local attorneys and judges. The four luncheons are alternated between the two divisions within the district, thereby giving all attorneys throughout the district an opportunity to attend, participate, and earn Continuing Legal Education credits. The meetings were held on March 2, 2023, June 8, 2023, September 7, 2023, and December 7, 2023.

- **Learn At Lunch: A Conversation With Third Circuit Judges** - On May 25, 2023, the District Court of the Virgin Islands hosted an educational lunch on St. Croix for members of the legal community, featuring the Honorable Theodore A. McKee, Senior Circuit Judge, and the Honorable L. Felipe Restrepo, Circuit Judge. With District Judge Wilma A. Lewis serving as mistress of ceremonies, Judges McKee and Restrepo discussed the new amendments to the Sentencing Guidelines and provided tips on Third Circuit practice. Following the discussion, the Judges and members of the audience engaged in a Q&A segment.

- **Naturalization Ceremonies** - A total of 363 people became new citizens of the United States through Naturalization Ceremonies held at the District Court of the Virgin Islands during 2023. The St. Thomas/St. John Division held 9 ceremonies and administered 229 oaths, while the St. Croix Division held 8 ceremonies and administered 134 oaths. Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson III, from the Division of St. Croix, presided over one naturalization ceremony in the Division of St. Thomas and St. John.

- **2023 Roadways To The Bench** - On April 3, 2023, the Judicial Conference Committees on the Administration of the Bankruptcy System and Magistrate Judges System hosted the 2023 Roadways to the Bench: “Who Me? A Bankruptcy or Magistrate Judge?” at 38 locations throughout the United States. The program’s focus is to provide an opportunity for lawyers and law students who are interested in serving as federal judges to participate in roundtables with bankruptcy, magistrate, district, and appellate

court judges. District Judge Wilma A. Lewis and Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller participated in the event in San Juan, Puerto Rico at the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico. After a national panel presentation, Judge Lewis and Magistrate Judge Miller joined roundtables of lawyers and law students to discuss their career paths to federal judgeships and answer questions.

- **Notre Dame Law School Visit** - In January, a group of first-year law students from the University of Notre Dame Law School visited the Almeric L. Christian Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on St. Croix as part of a course called Galilee. The course's focus is to provide students a firsthand experience of how lawyers are addressing issues of social justice through public service such that students could consider incorporating public interest work into their own legal careers. The students chose to visit St. Croix, and reached out to Kimberly D'Eramo, former Career Law Clerk to Magistrate Judge George W. Cannon, Jr. and Notre Dame Law alumna, to set up a visit at the District Court of the Virgin Islands.

District Judge Wilma A. Lewis and the students engaged in a robust conversation about career paths in the law, her own path in becoming a federal judge, and tips for students entering the legal profession. Judge Lewis also discussed the jurisdiction of the District Court of the Virgin Islands as an Article IV court. The students returned later in the week to observe a sentencing hearing over which Judge Lewis presided. Over the course of their visit, students also visited legal non-profit agencies on St. Croix.

- **St. Croix Central High School Visit** - On April 6, 2023, the Moot Court team from the St. Croix Central High School and their coach, Kelvin Vidale, Esq., visited the Almeric L. Christian Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on St. Croix ahead of the annual Moot Court competition. At the start of the visit, members of the United States Marshals Service and the United States Office of Probation and Pretrial Services spoke to the students about the respective roles of their agencies in the justice system. District Judge Wilma A. Lewis then spoke to students about her educational and career path before becoming a federal judge. Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson III also contributed to the discussion. Each student then introduced themselves and shared their future career goals.

- **The Rule Of Law Essay Contest** - The Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals sponsored an essay contest for 5th and 6th grade students within the Third Circuit. The contest was spearheaded locally by the District Court of the Virgin Islands. Fifth and sixth grade classes were invited to submit an essay entitled, "Why the Right to Vote is important to me and to our country."

Eight schools participated in the Virgin Islands: Antilles School, Joseph A. Gomez Elementary School, and St. Thomas/St. John Seventh-day Adventist School on St. Thomas; and Church of God Holiness Academy, Good Hope Country Day School, St.

Mary's Catholic School, St. Croix Christian Academy, and Saint Patrick's Catholic School on St. Croix. The essays submitted were evaluated by the District and Magistrate Judges for focus, content development, organization, and style.

On May 5, 2023, the District Court of the Virgin Islands held a public ceremony, simultaneously, at the Almeric L. Christian Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on St. Croix and the Ron de Lugo Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on St. Thomas. The ceremony was led by District Judge Wilma A. Lewis. During the ceremony, students from each participating school presented their respective class essays. Chief Judge Robert A. Molloy announced the winners. The first-place winner was Mrs. Myra Penn-Gumbs' 5th grade class at the Joseph A. Gomez Elementary School; the second-place winner was Ms. Jessica Francisco's 6th grade Section 2 class at the Antilles School; and the third-place winner was Mrs. Doreen Davis and Mrs. Marcella Combie's 6th grade class at the Church of God Holiness Academy. All essay submissions were outstanding and reflected the great amount of time, thought, and effort that students and teachers dedicated to this contest.

The District and Magistrate Judges presented trophies to each of the prize-winning schools, gifts to all participating students and teachers, and certificates of appreciation to each of the teachers and attorneys who assisted the students in their efforts.

- **29th Annual Moot Court Competition** - The 29th Annual Moot Court Competition, sponsored by the Virgin Islands Bar Association, was held on April 18, 2023, and April 20, 2023, at the District Court of the Virgin Islands, Division of St. Croix, and virtually via the Virgin Islands Judiciary's live streaming platform. Nine high schools, comprised of 21 teams of students, participated in the competition. District Judge Wilma A. Lewis provided encouraging welcome remarks to the students and attendees before the start of the Championship Round on April 20, 2023.

- **Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Attorney Training Program** - The Clerk's Office hosted a training on the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) eVoucher Program for attorneys and their staff. The session provided a working knowledge of the eVoucher system through the use of various scenarios via a live demonstration, as well as a review of the CJA eVoucher Attorney User Manual Release 6.9. Attorneys received 1.5 general hours of Continuing Legal Education credit for their attendance at the training session. Attorneys and their staff were given the opportunity to address any issues or concerns during the Q&A segment of the training.

- **Case Management/Electronic Case Files System (CM/ECF)** - The annual Case Management/Electronic Case Files System (CM/ECF) training was held on July 28, 2023 virtually via Microsoft Teams. The training was offered to attorneys and staff members to educate on the functionality of the judiciary-developed case management application that offers internet access to official case records in the federal courts.

Attorneys received 1.5 technology hours of Continuing Legal Education credits for their attendance at the training sessions.

- ***Pro Bono To Empower And Represent Act Of 2018 (Power Act)*** - On September 22, 2023, the District Court of the Virgin Islands and certain other U.S. District Courts co-sponsored a virtual Pro Bono to Empower and Represent Act of 2018 (POWER Act) Event. The Event's focus was the impact of pro bono representation on the lives of victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Members of the legal community were invited to attend. The forum was well-attended with 701 registered participants, 35 of whom were from the Virgin Islands.

Chief District Judge Laura Taylor Swain of the Southern District of New York delivered the welcome remarks and a brief history of the Pro Bono Work to Empower and Represent Act of 2018 (POWER Act). Chief Judge Swain also introduced the panel members to the participants by highlighting each panel member's background and relevance to the forum. The panel members were Susanna Saul, Esq., Director of Immigration at Her Justice, Inc.; Nicarla Donato, Founder of Starting with Me, LLC; Danijela Steinfeld, New York-based actress and award-winning filmmaker; and Paige McDonald, Public Speaker.

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The District Court of the Virgin Islands continues to engage the community at large through various activities. The Court looks forward to continuing its community outreach activities in 2024.

Middle District of Pennsylvania (MDPA)

- In January and February 2023, Magistrate Judge Joseph F. Saporito, Jr. and Judge Karoline Mehalchick participated in the high school mock trial competition held at the Scranton Federal Building, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Bar Association and the Lackawanna County Bar Association.

- In March 2023, the Middle District of Pennsylvania held a Naturalization Ceremony in the Scranton Federal Building. In May, it held a Naturalization Ceremony in Scranton with community guests, University of Scranton's Education Department, Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs Education Department, Dr. Tata J. Mbugua, Ph.D. and her students. In July, September, and October it held its Naturalization Ceremonies. In all ceremonies, members from the VFW, Post 6082, Peckville, and Daughters of the American Revolution and for Our Future Pennsylvania were guests of the court. Multiple Naturalization Ceremonies were held in the new federal courthouse in Harrisburg as well.

- In April 2023 Harrisburg’s new U.S. Courthouse opened to the public. After seven years of selecting a site, six years of waiting for funding and seven more years of designing and construction, the new Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse at 1501 N. Sixth Street opened to the public.

- In May 2023, award ceremonies were held in the Scranton, Harrisburg, and Williamsport courthouses for the fifth and sixth grade classes that submitted winning essays for the annual Third Circuit Courts, Community, and the Rule of Law Committee essay contest. In Harrisburg, Judge Jennifer P. Wilson provided a tour of the new federal courthouse for the students.

- In October 2023, Judge Saporito, Jr. spoke with students at Penn State Wilkes-Barre on federal court. Judge Saporito also provided the students with a tour of the Max Rosenn United States Courthouse in Wilkes-Barre.

- In October 2023, Judge Saporito gave a tour of the Max Rosenn U.S. Courthouse to King’s College pre-law students.

- In January 2023, several judges of the Middle District of Pennsylvania participated in Penn State Dickinson Law’s “Meet the Judges” night, which is an opportunity for law students who are interested in judicial internships or clerkships to speak informally and socially with judges.

- Throughout the year, judges of the court participated in new attorney Admission Ceremonies in all four vicinages of the Middle District.

- In the Summer of 2023, the Middle District held a Summer Lunch and Learn Series for all summer interns in the district, including the court, U.S. Attorney’s Office, Federal Defender’s Office, Probation, and U.S. Marshal’s Service.

District of New Jersey (Camden, Newark and Trenton) (D.N.J.)

- **Judge Chats** - Camden Vicinage Judges O’Hearn, Williams, King, Pascal, Altenburg and Poslusny continue to engage in “Judge Chats” at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia.

- **Reading Programs/School Visits** - The Judges and Clerk's Office staff of our district have been actively engaged in promoting civics education through school visits. These visits serve as invaluable opportunities to educate students about the court system and its role in American democracy.

Tailored to the age of the students, the visits feature a variety of engaging activities. For younger students, there are interactive book readings designed to introduce fundamental concepts of law and justice in an accessible and relatable way. These readings often feature stories that highlight the importance of fairness, equality, and the rule of law. As an example, Judge Matthew Skahill visited students at Christ the King Regional High School in February.

For older students, lectures are conducted to provide a deeper understanding of the court system, its structure, and its function within the framework of American governance. These sessions aim to demystify the legal process and empower students with knowledge about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. This was the experience of the students from Manville High School that Judge Singh visited and Bishop Eustace Prep that Judge Williams visited. Judge Pascal also visited the Camden Academy Charter High School to share education and career path information with students.

Through these school visits, students are not only exposed to important civic principles but also inspired to become informed and engaged members of society. By fostering a greater understanding of the court system and its significance, these initiatives contribute to the cultivation of active and responsible citizens who are equipped to participate meaningfully in the democratic process.

- **Constitution Day** - On October 19, 2023, the U.S. District Court in Camden hosted its Annual Constitution Day Program. The theme of this year's program was "The First Amendment." The Court hosted approximately 50 students from three area high schools: Pleasantville, Millville and Camden Academy. The Program, which is largely implemented by Law Clerks, began with welcoming remarks by Jerrold N. Poslusny, U.S.B.J., followed by the video presentation, "First Amendment Overview" by Justice Kagan. The students presented a scripted Mock Trial - "Davis v. Board of Education." Judges Hillman, Skahill, and King presided over the trials. Judges Altenburg, Pascal, and Williams also gave remarks. The program ended as usual with a brown bag lunch with the judges and student summaries of their Mock Trial experiences.

- **Courthouse Tours** - The New Jersey District Court hosted a number of student visitors from various school, including Rutgers New Brunswick, NJIT, Montclair State University, etc. Students had the opportunity to gain valuable insights into various aspects of the criminal justice system. The visits focused on the Probation Office, pretrial procedures, the U.S. Marshals, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the role of judges. Representatives from each office provided an overview of their various responsibilities in the court system. For example, because of the Probation office overview, students gained an understanding of how probation officers monitor and support individuals to prevent further criminal behavior and promote rehabilitation. The U.S. Marshals representative discussed their role in apprehending fugitives, providing courtroom security, and serving warrants and court orders.

The students also had opportunities to observe various court proceedings and talk to the judges. They learned about the responsibilities of judges in interpreting and applying the law, ensuring fairness during trials, and making impartial decisions. The visit provided an inside look into the judicial branch of the government and emphasized the importance of an independent judiciary in upholding justice.

The school visits provided students with a solid understanding of various components of the criminal justice system. They left with a deeper appreciation for the legal system and its impact on society. Judge Williams hosted the incoming class of Rutgers Law School's Minority Student Program. This event included a guided tour of the Courthouse and a brief overview of the Federal Courts. In addition, representatives of the Clerk's Office and U.S. Marshal's Service provided insight into their respective responsibilities.

- **Special Events**

- Black History**

Justice Delayed - The 2023 Black History Month Celebration's record attendance and phenomenal speaker made for a great return to an in-person celebration. This year's district-wide program was held in-person in Newark and broadcasted live to the Trenton and Camden offices. In Newark, POP and Renew Court participants, and in Camden, The Innocence Project members, were invited as special guests. The program was expertly conducted by Master of Ceremonies, the Hon. Julien X. Neals. Chief Judge Renée M. Bumb kicked off our celebration with inspiring opening remarks. We were also treated to a special presentation given by Federal Public Defender, K. Anthony Thomas, Esq., which contained some very eye-opening remarks. The event was headlined by keynote speaker Jimmie C. Gardner, who was introduced by the Hon. Susan D. Wigenton. Judge Wigenton's introduction caused Mr. Gardner to become visibly emotional. Mr. Gardner thanked Judge Wigenton for her remarks, stating that it was the best introduction that he had ever received. Mr. Gardner provided an abridged version of his life's ordeal that lasted twenty-seven years. Mr. Gardner's world was turned completely upside down when he was wrongly convicted and repeatedly denied the right to prove his innocence. He was finally afforded the opportunity to prove his innocence and obtain his freedom through a habeas corpus petition filed with U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia. After Mr. Gardner's release, he rebuilt his life while sharing his story to help inspire others. At the beginning of remarks, he stated that he shares his story because it is not his to keep. His perseverance is truly something to be admired. At the conclusion of the program, lunch was served in all three vicinages. In Newark, the Honorable Dickinson R. Debevoise Jury Assembly Room was transformed into The Justice Jazz House where live music, food, and conversation were enjoyed by all. In Camden, the Honorable Joseph H. Rodriguez Jury Assembly Room was transformed into a classroom where Antonne Henshaw, a formerly incarcerated person

and Director of the Transformative Justice Initiative, provided words of encouragement and guidance to students of Camden schools. It was truly a day of celebration and inspiration.

Hispanic Heritage

In 2023, the National Hispanic Heritage Month celebration embraced the theme of "Prosperity, Power, and Progress," honoring the enduring contributions and achievements of the Hispanic community. Gladys Novoa, serving as the Mistress of Ceremonies, initiated the program with energy and enthusiasm, setting the stage for an evening of reflection and celebration.

Chief Judge Renée Bumb extended a warm welcome to all attendees, emphasizing the significance of the occasion and the importance of recognizing Hispanic heritage and accomplishments. The keynote address was delivered by Victor A. Afanador, Esq., President of the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey, who eloquently explored the theme of prosperity, power, and progress within the Hispanic community, shedding light on the strides made and the challenges overcome.

Senior District Judge Joseph Rodriguez delivered closing remarks, offering poignant reflections on the significance of Hispanic heritage and the ongoing journey towards equality and empowerment. The Art in Motion group, under the direction of Darlin Rodriguez, provided entertainment, showcasing the vibrancy and diversity of Hispanic culture through their performances.

The event, originating in Camden, was livestreamed to other vicinages, ensuring widespread participation and engagement. Lunch was served at all locations, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie as attendees came together to honor and celebrate the rich tapestry of Hispanic heritage and accomplishments.

- **Naturalization Ceremonies** - The District of New Jersey holds monthly naturalization ceremonies, a source of immense pride and joy for the court family. These ceremonies, presided over by both district and magistrate judges, serve as poignant milestones for prospective citizens and their families, as well as for the judges themselves and the dedicated Clerk's Office Staff.

Emotions run high as the judges, prospective citizens, and their loved ones gather to witness the culmination of a journey towards citizenship. Each ceremony is marked by heartfelt speeches delivered by the judges and immigration officials, underscoring the significance of the occasion and the rights and responsibilities that come with becoming a citizen of the United States.

Following the solemn proceedings, the Clerk's Office Staff play a vital role in ensuring that the moment is commemorated in a special way. They distribute giveaways and court swag, serving as tangible mementos of this life-changing event for the new citizens.

These naturalization ceremonies not only celebrate the fulfillment of individual dreams but also embody the enduring spirit of inclusion and diversity that defines the fabric of American society. They serve as reminders of the values that unite us and the strength that comes from embracing our shared humanity.

- **Partnering With The Legal Community** - The District of New Jersey demonstrated its continued support of its Pro Bono attorneys and also hosted Brown Bag Lunches in all three vicinages. The Brown Bag Lunch Series is coordinated by the Association of the Federal Bar, hosted in each courthouse and discusses topics of interest presented by the Bar. Additionally, various Mock Trials and Inn of Court activities were hosted by some of the judges in Newark. As an example, Judge Julien Neals hosted a mock trial in early May. Judge Shwartz also lead an Inn of Court in early June.

December 4, 2023 Annual Young Lawyers, Federal Judges and 2023-2024 Law Clerks Welcome Reception

AFBNJ and the USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Frank Lautenberg U.S. Post Office & Federal Courthouse

September 26, 2023 POWER Act Presentation

USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Virtual Webinar

Judges who participated:

Hon. Renée Marie Bumb, Chief, U.S.D.J.

Hon. Rukhsanah L. Singh, U.S.M.J.

May 4, 2023 The Attorney Client Privilege for “Predominantly Legal” Communications: Black, White and Shades of Gray

AFBNJ and the USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Virtual Webinar

Judges who participated:

Hon. Rukhsanah L. Singh, U.S.M.J.

April 26, 2023 Has Everything in Federal Criminal Prosecutions Changed or Is It Much Ado About Nothing? – We provided event space.

AFBNJ with the US Attorney’s Office and the Office of the Federal Public Defender

Location: Martin Luther King, Jr. Building and U.S. Courthouse

April 20, 2023 The Magistrate Judge Selection Process

Location: The Law Center, New Brunswick

Judges who participated:

Hon. Renée Marie Bumb, Chief U.S.D.J

Hon. Claire C. Cecchi, U.S.D.J.

Hon. Zahid N. Quraishi, U.S.D.J.

Hon. Susan D. Wigenton, U.S.D.J.

February 7, 2023 The Nuts and Bolts of Seeking Emergent and Injunctive Relief

AFBNJ and the USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Zoom Webinar

Judges who participated:

Hon. Renée Marie Bumb, Chief U.S.D.J

Hon. Christine P. O'Hearn, U.S.D.J.

January 23, 2023 5th Annual Pro Bono Institute

Location: Zoom Webinar

Judges who participated:

Hon. Sharon A. King, U.S.M.J.

Hon. Leda Dunn Wettre, U.S.M.J.

Hon. Lois Goodman, U.S.M.J.

The programs were done virtually and in person at the various courthouses, as indicated above.

- **Essay Contest** - In 2023, the District of New Jersey, in collaboration with the Third Circuit Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee, hosted an essay contest open to 5th and 6th-grade students statewide. The theme for the contest was "What does the Rule of Law mean to you and to our country."

Students across the state enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas on this important topic, resulting in hundreds of submissions. After careful review and consideration, 51 students were selected as winners, representing the best and most insightful essays from each of the three vicinages.

To celebrate their achievements, an awards ceremony was held, honoring the winning students for their thought-provoking contributions. The ceremony provided a platform for the students to share their perspectives on the rule of law and its significance, while also recognizing their talent and dedication.

As part of the festivities, the winners were treated to a special luncheon with judges and other supporting staff, fostering a sense of camaraderie and appreciation within the legal community. This unique opportunity allowed the students to engage with legal

professionals and gain a deeper understanding of the importance of the rule of law in our society.

The essay contest not only encouraged students to reflect on fundamental principles of justice and governance but also served as a testament to the commitment of the District of New Jersey and the 3rd Circuit Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee to promoting civic education and engagement among the youth.

● **Additional Community Activities** - The ETHICS committee, made up of members of the Clerks' Offices of the District and Bankruptcy Courts coordinated the following last year:

Trenton Area Soup Kitchen – March 2023 Food Service – Served Dinner to Patrons; *HomeFront* - May 2023 - diaper and wipes drive; *The Children's Home Society* – July 2023 Back to School Drive – School Supplies; *Trenton Area Soup Kitchen* – October 2023 Assembled Hygiene Bags; *Trenton Area Soup Kitchen* – December 2023 US Bankruptcy Clerk's Office Food Donation.

Judges Gravelle and Meisel served on the local planning committee for the Roadways to the Bench program this past year for its NYC location.

Submitted by:

Third Circuit Judicial Council Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee

Judge D. Brooks Smith, Chair
Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, Co-Chair
Judge Cynthia M. Rufe, Co-Chair
Chief Judge Michael A. Chagares
Judge Cathy Bissoon
Chief Bankruptcy Judge Carlotta M. Bohm
Judge Ashely M. Chan
Magistrate Judge Sherry R. Fallon
Judge Christine M. Gravelle
Judge Emile A. Henderson, III
Judge Mark A. Kearney
Judge Wilma A. Lewis
Judge Maryellen Noreika
Judge Joseph E. Saporito, Jr.
Judge Karen M. Williams
Judge Jennifer P. Wilson

Margaret A. Wiegand, Circuit Executive