

THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

COURTS, COMMUNITY AND RULE OF LAW COMMITTEE

2024 ACTIVITY REPORT



**Third Judicial Circuit
Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee
2024 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 2024. 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 WORKSHOP

Since our 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). The CCRL Committee engaged in spreading the word for local Bar Associations and Community Colleges to take up the syllabus and agenda and establish our course in their own counties.

With great enthusiasm, the course reached the Bucks County Community College in Bucks County where leaders of the local Bar Association and College administrators worked closely with Judge Rufe to create a similar course for Spring 2024 semester. Please see below our classes and presenters, a mix of original CCP faculty and Bucks County judges and attorneys who were eager to join this program. Interest of local courts and suburban 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, for which the CCP and the BCCC have proven to be stellar examples.

As an example of the spirit in the Bucks Community, and with the recognition by all that the Rule of Law is vital to the curriculum of this course, the Bucks County Bar Association Foundation donated funds to defray the registration fees for 20 students in this semester. The Community College supported each and every function of administration, including marketing and security, location and logistics.

The CCRL Committee looks forward to spreading the enthusiasm for this course amongst more schools in the Circuit. BCCC and CCP both plan to repeat the course in 2025. Several Circuits who are interested in our unique type of Adult Civics Education program have contacted Judges Rendell and Rufe for information, as have our own circuit judges and state court judges for the same.

We value the time devoted to presenting this course and thank those instructors who volunteered in 2024:

March 27

Introduction to Federal Court - USDC Judge Cynthia M. Rufe, Former Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Linda C. Caracappa (ret.), U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Patricia Mayer

April 3

Criminal Law and the Fourth Amendment - Judge Gary Gilman, Bucks County Court of Common Pleas, USDC Judge John Gallagher, Louis Busico, Esquire

April 10

Labor, Employment and Discrimination Law - USDC Judge Mark Kearney, Grace Deon, Esquire, Christine Reger, Esquire

April 17

Voting Rights and Election Law - Judge Jordan Yeager, Bucks County Court of Common Pleas, Kathy Bockvar, Esquire, Amy Fitzpatrick, Esquire, Elizabeth Fritsch, Esquire

April 24

Immigration Law - US Court of Appeals, Third Circuit Judge Felipe Restrepo, Heidi Roux, Executive Director, Immigrant Rights Action, Sheena Bediako, Esquire

May 1

Civil Rights and the 14th Amendment - USDC Judge Gerald McHugh, Carol Shelly, Esquire

May 8

First Amendment and Civil Discourse - USDC Judge Lawrence Stengel (ret.), Stuart Wilder, Esquire, Michael Twersky, Esquire

May 15

Conclusion "How Do Judges Decide?" - US Court of Appeals Third Circuit Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, EDPA Chief Judge Mitchell Goldberg and EDPA Judge Cynthia M. Rufe

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 2024, our judicial volunteers covered sixty-four (64) 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.

ESSAY CONTEST

The *Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Third Circuit* hosted its 3rd Annual Third Circuit Essay Contest in 2024. 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 is the Right to a Jury Trial Important?” Essays were submitted before a March 29th 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 4th Annual Essay Contest in 2025.

VIDEO CONTEST

The *Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee of the Third Circuit* hosted its 1st Annual Video Contest in 2024. The video contest opened on September 2 and ended November 1, 2024. The contest was open to high school students in grades 9 through 12 on the “Importance of American Democracy.” The videos were judged on three criteria: creativity, adherence to the theme, and content. The 2024 contest subcommittee awarded First Place to a 9th grade student from Odessa High School in Townsend, DE. The winning video will be played during all districts’ naturalization ceremonies until the next winner is selected. The winning video also will appear on the Third Circuit’s website, district websites, and other related social media platforms. The District of Delaware plans to invite the winner and his family to a naturalization ceremony in spring of 2025 where the winning video will be shown at the ceremony and the student will be recognized for his achievement.

CIRCUIT JUDGES REPORT

Circuit Judges Stephanos Bibas, Cheryl Ann Krause and E. Felipe Restrepo, continued their participation in the popular Judge Chats Program at the National Constitution Center throughout 2024.

In addition, Judge Bibas participated in the “Beyond Left and Right” program at the New York Encounter in February and, participated in the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, including speaking about the handling of Election cases.

Chief Judge Michael Chagares visited the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut in April, speaking about the Rule of Law.

Judge E. Felipe Restrepo participated in several speaking engagements in 2024. Judge Restrepo gave an overview of the judicial system to high school students at Penn Provost Office; participated in the Central High Moot Court Exercise; served as a speaker at Peter Gonzalez’s LLM Class at Temple University; served as a panelist on American Constitution Society (ACS) and Latin American Law Students Association (LALSA) at Temple University; spoke at University of Michigan Law School with ACS, LLAS, University of Michigan Defender, ACLU; participated in settlement talks with students from Temple University; speaker at Seaton Hall with the New Jersey Federal Bar on Third Circuit Practices; served on New York University Law Clerk panel; gave Welcoming Remarks at Reentry Symposium; served as a moderator on panel discussion on “Access to Education” at Reentry Symposium; moderated a panel discussion on “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy” at the Reentry Symposium; spoke at Bucks County Community College on immigration; spoke with Philadelphia school students on the role of judges; participated in Reentry panel at Philadelphia Bar Association; participated in discussion of USSC with judges from Jakarta; spoke with 2nd grade students from Southwark Elementary School; served as moderator for panels at U.S. Sentencing Commission meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana; and participated in Diversity panel for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Judge Patty Shwartz met with a high school group who visited the court, and college students from Rutgers University who have visited the court. Judge Shwartz also visited Rutgers Honors College. She participated in the District of New Jersey’s Take your Child to Work Day and did her first Naturalization Ceremony in 2024. She presided over a mock trial for prospective law students at Seton Hall University and met with students from Austria spending time at Montclair State University.

Judge D. Brooks Smith participated in a panel discussion in March for The Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities, discussing how universities and the courts can work together to promote civic education. He also

participated in Waynesburg University's Lecture Series, presenting "The American Jury: Citizens & The Search for Justice." He delivered the Commencement Address at Duquesne University School of Law, emphasizing the importance new graduates will play in promoting respect for the Rule of Law. In July, Judge Smith participated in Waynesburg University's Stover Center for Constitutional Studies and Moral Leadership presentation at Jesus College, Cambridge University of "The American Jury: Citizens and the Search for Justice." And, in November, Judge Smith met with students from Waynesburg University, and participated in a Q&A. The Stover Center for Constitutional Studies and Moral Leadership presents: "A Few things I've Noticed" in 40 years as a judge."

REPORTS BY DISTRICT

Eastern District of Pennsylvania (EDPA)

Below is a broad summary of the 2024 efforts of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania's Community Outreach Committee consisting of judges and three working groups of community leaders from all nine counties. We enter our fourth year of the present Committee continuing to focus on the three established legs of our mission represented in three working groups: interaction/education with students from K-12 in all District and home schools; university, law school, CLE, and adult education into specific aspects of the Rule of Law and Judicial Independence; and, promoting the education and support of our jurors including supplementing the 2024 and 2025 efforts of the Jury Initiative. Our working groups hold bi-monthly morning conference calls (including one on January 9, 2025) to coordinate efforts to promote the rule of law and judicial independence. We hold a May Law Week luncheon at the Downtown Club where you can interact with each of these leaders. And we convene a working groups dinner each Fall. The regular interaction fuels new ideas. We also today outline 2025 plans working with the Court of Appeals, the Administrative Office of the US Courts, our Court's jury diversity initiative, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Commission on Judicial Independence, the Pennsylvania and local Bar Associations, Intermediate Units, Universities and Colleges, and several affinity groups.

Educational Outreach from K-12

Our District solicited and reviewed ten class entries in the Court of Appeals' Law Day 2024 Essay Contest for 5th and 6th grade classes in our District. We held an awards ceremony in the Ceremonial Courtroom during May's Law Week honoring the three winning essays and recognizing each of the participants. Judge Hodge arranged an author to talk with the students.

Judge Ashely Chan led our District's effort in the Circuit's first video contest resulting in the December 2024 selection of a video from Western Pennsylvania.

Our Court is presently participating in the National Bill or Rights Day "Candid Conversations" Program with high school students along with members of the probation office and local lawyers.

Judge Joseph Leeson joined several Bar leaders for meetings with grade school students in the Lehigh Valley for Constitution Day.

Several judges participated in high school mock trials through the Beasley Temple LEAP Program and Pennsylvania Bar supplementing efforts across the Commonwealth. Judges also participated in mock appellate arguments in the law schools throughout the district and with Rutgers Camden and William & Mary.

Judge Ashely Chan welcomed eighty-one 5th grade students from Greenfield Elementary for a full day civics education in the Bankruptcy Court.

Several (estimated fifteen) of our colleagues spoke during "Judge Chats" at the National Constitution Center in 2024.

Several colleagues participated in "Read Aloud" bi-monthly programming for first to fourth graders in conjunction with the Constitution Center and the Pennsylvania Bar.

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 the Rendell Center's scripted mock trial including last month's presentation of the Goldilocks trial.

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 coordinate with the Clerk's office in welcoming visiting classes to the Courtrooms.

University, Law School, Adult, and Continuing Legal Education

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 sentencings presented by university students in Western Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Bar expanded 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 colleagues in Philadelphia. We prepared and circulated new hypotheticals.

We expanded the diversity introductions for students from the neighboring law schools including a “Pathways to the Bench” program for Friday January 20, 2024 in the Byrne Courthouse. Several judges hosted summer international interns in their Chambers as part of our rule of law outreach efforts.

Judge Cynthia Rufe along with colleagues on our Court and several state courts and leading attorneys present weekly in our local colleges to adult students. Adults in Philadelphia County have long benefited from this program. Adults in Bucks County participated at the Bucks County Community College this year.

We dramatically expanded our outreach to the Bar across eight of the nine counties and are working through the Lancaster County Bar to bring our judges there. Our colleagues presented continuing legal education on a regular basis with considerable credit to each one for taking time out of the schedules to appear live and virtually across the District. The Pennsylvania CLE Board Bar estimates over 250 teaching hours invested by members of our Court in 2024 Bar-sponsored CLE just through the Pennsylvania and local Bars.

Jury Outreach

Our Working Group on jury awareness and participation is working closely with the Court’s Jury Committee in expanding the role of the Court and Bar in promoting jury diversity and participation. Several members of this Working Group are active members of the Jury participated initiative led by former Chief Judge Juan Sanchez, Judge Jeffery Schmehl, Judge Gerald McHugh, Judge John Younge, and Judge Mia Perez. We expect to play a role in the distribution of information particularly among the senior high school students who will soon be eligible for jury service.

Communications

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 bimonthly 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 with the Rendell Center.

We followed the Law Day 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 hosted a substantive working dinner this Fall with several state court judges, court administrators, educational leaders, and executive directors of several non-profit groups. We addressed new ways of reaching our communities. We specifically addressed preparing a link on our Court webpage to provide citizens with updates on our past (not future).

Our social media outreach is now focused on LinkedIn following our thoughtful discussions at our annual Fall dinner. We will continue our exercises of inviting students, speaking to community groups, and working with community colleges through the LinkedIn site featured on the Court's website opening page.

We again welcomed Italian judges and lawyers through Judges Padova and Rufe.

We continued to coordinate efforts with the Court's Historical Society including updating the Magistrate Judge tribute on the third floor of the Byrne Courthouse, focusing on creating interview histories of our senior judges, and coordinating for the annual dinner each Fall. Special thanks to Fred Druding in the Clerk's Office for his coordination in this effort and in our circulated notices.

We continue to host naturalization ceremonies in our communities, including Judges Rufe's and Wolson's efforts. We also continue to welcome students from location schools into the Naturalization Ceremonies in our Ceremonial Courtrooms including a class with Judge Rufe in December.

Middle District of Pennsylvania (MDPA)

In January and February 2024, 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 August 2024, Judges Jennifer Wilson, Susan Schwab, and Daryl Bloom, in coordination with the staff of the Clerk of Courts, sent a letter to all of the school districts within the Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse vicinage to invite civics education partnerships. The schools were asked to contact the court to arrange educational programs that would work for their district. This outreach effort resulted in numerous school districts contacting the court to arrange a variety of programs. The judges have hosted middle school and high school students from a variety of school districts at the courthouse for tours, mock trial programs, and Q&A sessions. The judges have also been invited to engage with students at schools for panel discussions and Q&A sessions. The response from the school personnel and students has been tremendously positive.

During the months of March, May, July, September, and November 2024, the Middle District of Pennsylvania held Naturalization Ceremonies in the William J. Nealon Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse in Scranton. In all ceremonies, members from the VFW, Post 6082, Peckville, and Daughters of the American Revolution were in attendance. Naturalization Ceremonies were held in the new Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg in May, July, September and December in connection with the law-related national days of recognition.

In September 2024, Judge Saporito spoke to 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 November 2024.

In March 2024, 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 2024, the Middle District held a Summer Lunch and Learn Series for all summer interns throughout the district. Representatives from the court, U.S. Attorney's Office, Federal Defender's Office, U.S. Probation office, and U.S. Marshals Service participated.

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 2024, in addition to participating in the Circuit-wide essay contest, the Circuit-wide video 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 detailing 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. 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.

Through a program sponsored by the State Department, our Court hosted an intern from Serbia, Tijana Saldic. The program is designed to afford promising young professionals (age 25-35) the opportunity to learn about their respective professions in the United States. Ms. Saldic, a practicing lawyer, appreciated the opportunity to learn about the federal judiciary in the United States and the importance of rule of law in this country.

Hosted our annual Open Doors program. Over 200 students convened at our Pittsburgh courthouse to learn about careers in the law and to participate in a mock trial.

Hosted a program in our Johnstown division 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.

From Pittsburgh to Ecuador, our judges hosted and visited (in person and virtually) numerous elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges and law schools throughout the year, to judge and coach 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 takes great pride in engaging with the community through its many outreach activities.

The Court is pleased to report that it has been working hard to develop new programs for different areas of need within the community and continue previously established programs. In addition to actively contacting multiple organizations regarding the various offerings, the financial literacy and basic bankruptcy programs developed by the Court are advertised on the Community Outreach tab on the Court's website. Groups are encouraged to contact the Court to learn more and schedule presentations. This report provides a summary of the outreach events that occurred in 2024 as well as the planning undertaken in 2024 for future events.

Financial Literacy for Veterans: A financial literacy presentation has been created to specifically address the needs of veterans, and multiple organizations have been contacted regarding this program.

A presentation was held on April 3, 2024, with the Duquesne School of Law Veterans Clinic, and another is scheduled for March 19, 2025.

A financial literacy presentation has also been scheduled for the Veterans Leadership Program that will take place in Spring 2025.

Financial Literacy for the Armed Forces: A financial literacy presentation has been designed to specifically address the needs of the members of the armed forces. Organizations have been contacted regarding the availability of this program.

Financial Literacy for Immigrants: A financial literacy presentation has been specifically designed to address the needs of immigrants. The program has been successfully presented in the past, and interest has been expressed by multiple organizations for future presentations.

Basic Budgeting and General Financial Literacy Program: A program of general applicability to reach a broad audience has been created and designed for presentation at local libraries and similar venues.

Student and Youth Outreach Activities: Twice in 2024 the Court hosted "Credit & the Bankruptcy Court: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Student Finances." The event is a half-day financial literacy program and includes a mock trial, an informative panel of judges and law clerks, and a trivia game involving questions dealing with bankruptcy, credit, student loans, and other types of debt. At the April 5, 2024, program, 80 high school students attended in Pittsburgh. At the October 28, 2024, program, approximately 150 students attended in Pittsburgh. The next event is scheduled on March 31, 2025, which will be held for the first time in Erie.

The Court also developed a financial literacy program geared toward students that can be presented by Judges and attorneys at local high schools and community colleges.

Both the Erie and the Pittsburgh Bankruptcy Courts participated in “Take Your Child to Work Day,” which was held on April 25, 2024. The children were able to tour a Judge’s chambers and courtroom and learn about the Court and the role of the Judges.

Judge Melaragno participated in a panel discussion along with Assistant United States Attorney Molly Anglin and Retired 1st Sergeant Joe Benacci of the US Army Reserves for the Youth Civic Engagement Symposium on September 17, 2024. Over 170 high school students attended, and the panel discussed life as a Bankruptcy Judge, federal prosecutor, and various military options, while also including a Q&A session following the panel discussion.

On September 18, 2024, in Seattle, Washington, a financial literacy course was provided to high school students by Judge Böhm in conjunction with the GENTS Organization.

Empowering Women for Political and Social Leadership Event: On October 2, 2024, Judge Böhm hosted twelve women leaders from the Near East and North Africa participating in a project sponsored by The International Visitor Leadership Program and U.S. Department of State and the Global Pittsburgh Organization. The group toured Judge Böhm’s chambers and courtroom, and Judge Böhm gave a presentation about her background and career path.

Pathways to Leadership – the ACBA Federal Bench Event: On October 3, 2024, Judge Böhm, whose family immigrated from Argentina when she was a young girl, attended and presented at this event. Judge Böhm discussed her pathway to the bench. The purpose of this event was to promote diversity on the bench to reflect the diversity of the Community and give insight to participants on the Judges’ experiences.

Brown Bag Lunches: Twice a year, in collaboration with the Bankruptcy and Commercial Law Section of the Allegheny County Bar Association, the Bankruptcy Court invites local bar members and their staff to participate in Brown Bag Lunches with the Bankruptcy Judges as a forum for sharing ideas, suggestions, questions, issues, and concerns related to case management, court procedures, and general practice matters. The events took place on April 19, 2024, and on November 1, 2024, with participants joining via Zoom and in person.

• **Internships:**

The Court hosted interns throughout 2024 to enable students to gain valuable observational and hands-on experience which will benefit them as future members of the legal community. The Court maintains ongoing relationships with local law schools to advertise this opportunity.

In addition, Judge Böhm coordinated with Washington & Jefferson College to make a 2025 summer internship available for a college student. The opportunity is designed for students considering law school to discover a deeper understanding of the legal system and the function of the Court.

Judge Böhm also committed to participate in the Summer Judicial Internship Diversity Project. The SJID Project provides summer judicial internships to law students from communities underrepresented in the legal community. This national project reaches beyond the local law schools.

Bankruptcy 101 Video and Presentation: With the goal of reaching a broad audience to introduce important financial literacy concepts as well as basic bankruptcy principles, the Clerk's Office, in conjunction with Judge Böhm's law clerks, created an informative, podcast-styled presentation accompanied by a slideshow. The 20-minute presentation provides an overview and comparison of Chapters 7, 11, and 13, as well as a brief discussion regarding Chapter 15. The audience is introduced to significant bankruptcy concepts, and the presentation highlights the importance of budgeting. The presentation has been utilized within the Court for training purposes in 2024, with the idea of expanding the circulation to outside organizations, such as schools.

JOINED (Judicial Outreach Initiative Encouraging Diversity) Program: The Court created a paid Summer Employee and Volunteer Internship to implement this initiative. This provides a first-hand learning experience with bankruptcy judges and court employees. The goal and initiative of this program was to attract new talent and encourage diversity of all kinds, such as age, disability, race, and gender in the federal court system.

Naturalization Ceremonies: The Bankruptcy Judges continued to conduct naturalization ceremonies throughout 2024.

District of Delaware (D.Del.)

State and National High School Mock Trial Competitions

The Delaware High School Mock Trial competition took place from February 22 through February 24 in 2024. Judge Maryellen Noreika and Magistrate Judge Sherry Fallon judged intermediate rounds, and Judge Noreika judged the final round of the Delaware competition. This competition determined the State finalists who advanced to compete in the National competition which Delaware hosted in 2024.

From May 3rd through May 4th, Delaware hosted the National Mock Trial Competition at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington, Delaware. More than 450 high school students from across the country and teams from overseas competed. Judge Maryellen Noreika and Magistrate Judge Sherry Fallon served as judges for the intermediate rounds.

In addition, on July 19, 2024, Judge Maryellen Noreika served as a judge for an inaugural mock trial summer camp for middle school students held at the Cab Calloway School of the Arts in Wilmington, Delaware.

Student Courthouse Visits

On March 4, 2024, Judge Maryellen Noreika and Magistrate Judge Sherry Fallon hosted Middle School students from the Eastside Charter School for a program focused on “Argue Like a Lawyer.” The students were placed in small groups to prepare for brief oral arguments for and against designated topics. The pre-argument discussion covered a range of issues including the difference between rights and privileges, fairness, civility, and the enforceability of the law.

On September 17, 2024, Judges Noreika and Fallon hosted a similar program for Middle School students from Kuumba Academy. In keeping with the spirit of Constitution Day, the students’ oral advocacy topic involved a discussion of a proposed Constitutional Amendment. The students engaged in a discussion of how such amendments are enacted and broke into small groups in two courtrooms to make their arguments for and against a Constitutional Amendment related to limiting a teacher’s ability to assign homework.

On December 6, 2024, Judge Maryellen Noreika and Magistrate Judge Sherry Fallon presided at the mock trial in the case of Greenville v. Goldie Locks. Middle School students from Serviam Girls Academy and the Nativity Preparatory School assumed the roles of attorneys, witnesses and jurors for the trial.

Law Day Celebration of Essay Contest Winners

Delaware students in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grades participated in The Courts, Community and Rule of Law Committee’s annual essay contest on the topic: “Why is the Right to a Jury Trial Important?” On May 6, 2024, in celebration of Law Day, Judge Maryellen Noreika was joined by Bankruptcy Judge J. Kate Stickles, Magistrate Judge Christopher Burke and Magistrate Judge Sherry Fallon to acknowledge the essay contest winners in the District of Delaware. The judges presented congratulatory remarks to the students on the excellent quality of the submissions and the impressive presentations by the student speakers.

Constitution and Bill of Rights Day Celebrated at Naturalization Ceremonies

On September 20, 2024, Magistrate Judge Laura Hatcher presided at a Naturalization ceremony where Senator Christopher Coons presented congratulatory remarks to the 39 new citizens.

On December 6, 2024, Judge Maryellen Noreika presided at the Naturalization ceremony held at the University of Delaware. A total of 150 new citizens were naturalized.

As in all Naturalization ceremonies in the District of Delaware, the League of Women Voters and Daughters of the American Revolution were guests of the court who presented American flags and voter registration materials to the new citizens.

Pro Bono to Empower and Represent Act of 2018 (Power Act)

On July 19, 2024, the District of Delaware and certain other United States District Courts co-sponsored a virtual *Pro Bono* to Empower and Represent Act of 2018 (“POWER Act”) event. The focus of the event was on 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.

High School Fellowship Program

In July of 2024, the District of Delaware held its annual High School Fellowship Program. The program provides an opportunity for students who have faced challenges in their lives to learn more about the operation of the courts and their related agencies, and to gather information about law-related careers. Three students from different high schools were selected from among a larger pool of applicants for the four-week program. The students worked in chambers with the Judges of the District Court, in the Federal

Public Defenders' Office, and in the Office of the Clerk of the District Court. The high school fellows had the opportunity to observe court proceedings and engage with federal agency leaders and members of the bench and bar.

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

School and Community Visits

During 2024 our Judges in the District of New Jersey continued to welcome students and school programs into the Courthouses and into the Courtrooms for in depth and personalized interactions with the Federal Court system. Additionally, many of our Judges visited schools and college programs. Outreach reported by our Judges in 2024 includes the following:

Judge Williams served as a Judge for the Camden County Bar Foundation High School Mock Trial; Competition in February, visited Bishop Eustice High School on March 18, acted as a finals Judge for the Hunter Moot Court Finals on March 28, and was involved with an event for the Rutgers Camden Minority Student Program in October.

Judge Neals spoke at Tri-County Paramus High School and North Star High School in April, served as the keynote speaker at the Bergen County College graduation in May, and hosted the NJ LEEP Program in July.

Judge Castner hosted Cape May County Technical School and hosted a mock trial in April. Judge Castner was a guest speaker for a Women Studies Class at Bridgewater-Raritan High School in June.

Judges Hammer, Clark, Allen, Hayden, Arleo, Martinotti, Shipp and Bongiovanni participated in the McLaughlin Advanced Trial Advocacy Workshop with Seton Hall students in January.

Judges O'Hearn, King, Altenburg and Poslusny served as guest speakers throughout the year at the National Constitution Center.

Judge King was a guest judge at Rutgers Law School's Hunter Moot Court Program, a guest speaker at Rutgers Law School's Pretrial Advocacy Class, and hosted two separate Courthouse visits for Rutgers Law students.

Judge Semper hosted a class from Seton Hall Law in November.

Judge Cecchi hosted fifth and sixth grade students from the Essex Fells School for a mock trial and education about the Court system.

Judge Shipp served as a guest speaker for Purplefect High School in Trenton, was the keynote speaker at Seton Hall's law school graduation in Spring 2024 and served as a guest moot court Judge at a school in Princeton.

Judge Kirsch was a guest speaker at Fordham Law and UPenn Law in March, UVA Law in September and hosted a class from University of Scranton's Pre-Law Society in November.

Judge Quraishi participated in NJ Muslim Lawyer Association Heritage month in January, was part of a Judicial speaking panel at Rutgers Law School in February, the third keynote speaker at The Kenneth D. Gray & Phyllis L. Propp-Fowle, Lectures on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion held in March at the U.S. Army JAG School, was the keynote speaker for the Pakistani Heritage & Resolution Month Celebration in March in New York City, was a guest speaker at STEM school in Ewing, NJ in May, participated in a speaking engagement at Columbia Law School in September, and was a Judge in Rutgers Law School moot court competition in November.

On November 19, 2024, Judge Salas hosted a group of students from Janis Dismus Middle School from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm for an educational program on the federal court system, including the roles of our judges and the various offices in our federal family such as pretrial services, probation, the Office of the Federal Public Defender, and the United States Attorney's Office. There were approximately 40 students present, and three staff members accompanied them. Students met with Judge Salas and her Honor's Team including interns present that day.

Courthouse Tours

The U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey actively engages with the community through a variety of outreach activities designed to foster a deeper understanding of the judicial system. Courthouse tours aim to build public trust, inspire future legal professionals, and promote civic engagement.

In 2024, the District of New Jersey hosted student visitors from various schools throughout New Jersey from elementary through college. During these visits the students had the opportunity to meet with representatives from other agencies, including Probation and Pretrial Services, the U.S. Marshals Service, Bankruptcy and the U.S. Attorney's Office and gain insight into each agency's role in the federal system. Additionally, many students were given the opportunity to observe Court proceedings and have conversations with a Judge. Many of these conversations were student-lead with a majority asking well

thought out questions with the Judges communicating their knowledge of the judicial system. In July, Newark hosted an annual visit from Montclair University's Pre-College Summer program during which a group of high school students spoke with Judge Shwartz, observed a sentencing hearing before Judge Cecchi, were given an overview of the U.S. Marshals Service with Deputy USM Uhler and explosives detection K-9 Grover, and finally had a discussion with Daniela Guido of the Pretrial Services Office. In February and October, over 12 pre-planned days, the Newark Courthouse hosted approximately 400 students from Rutgers University – New Brunswick enrolled in Law & Politics, many who are aspiring lawyers and law enforcement officers. Each day the students visited they observed a hearing and then met with one of our Judges to learn their background and rise to the bench followed by a question-and-answer period. The students were able to visit with Judge Neals, Judge Adams, Judge Espinosa, Judge Almonte, Judge Semper, Judge Wettre and Judge Chesler.

Naturalization Ceremonies

The U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey plays a pivotal role in the naturalization process, holding two naturalization ceremonies each month in each vicinage—Newark, Trenton and Camden. These ceremonies are a momentous occasion, marking the culmination of a long journey for individuals seeking to become U.S. citizens. Our District, Magistrate Judges and Bankruptcy Judges preside over these ceremonies with immense pride and excitement. In June Judge Shipp presided over a ceremony that was held in Trenton at the Trenton War Memorial with over 300 applicants realizing their dream of becoming a citizen. On occasion, these ceremonies are attended by visiting schools as well allowing the students to gain firsthand experience of the U.S. Citizenship process.

Essay Contest

In 2024, the District of New Jersey, in conjunction 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 “Why is the Right to a Jury Trial Important?” Essays were submitted from classes and individual students throughout the state and on May 2nd the winners were invited to each vicinage to be honored with an awards ceremony and present their winning essays. To continue the celebration the students had lunch with the Judges. Judge Williams, Judge Almonte, Judge Singh and Judge Pascal devoted their time to review and select the winning essays and hosted the winners at each Courthouse. The essay contest continues to be a great source of engagement with schools and students of the communities.

Constitution Day

The Camden vicinage hosted its annual Constitution Day Program on October 28, 2024. The theme of this year's program was "Civil Dialogue." The Court hosted approximately 60 students from three area high schools: Atlantic City High School organized through the Battier Take Charge Foundation. 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, "Why have Civil Dialogue" and a discussion on the First Amendment with the Honorable Sharon A. King. The students presented a scripted Mock Trial - "Randy Cullen v. Principal Skinner" before Judges Kiel and Williams. Additionally, Judge Skahill presented a history of our Court and Judge Pascal closed the program with final remarks. As always, the students were able to have lunch with the Judges in the Jury Assembly Room to continue the conversation and reflect on the events of the day.

Special Events

Black History Month

The 2024 Black History Month theme was "African Americans & the Arts." A districtwide celebration was held on February 27, 2024 with a presentation given by K. Anthony Thomas, A.F.P.D., Judge Julien X. Neals, and Judge Jamel K. Semper.

AAPI Celebration

A districtwide celebration was held on May 23, 2024 with focus on the theme of "Advancing Leaders Through Celebration." Judge Edward S. Kiel served as the keynote speaker.

Pride Month Program

The District of New Jersey held its first ever Price Celebration in all three vicinages on June 27, 2024. The program was dedicated to recognizing the contributions of the LGBTQIA+ community to the federal courts. A pre-recorded video interview with former New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey served as the keynote for this event.

Hispanic Heritage

The 2024 National Hispanic Heritage theme was "Pioneers of Change: Shaping the Future Together." The District of New Jersey held a statewide celebration on September 26, 2024 with keynote speaker retired Judge Joseph H. Rodriguez, with Lisa J. Rodriguez, Esquire.

Veterans Program

A celebration was held on November 6, 2024 districtwide to honor veterans in the federal family as well as veterans with close family ties to the court. An Honor Guard from Joint Base McGuire, Dix, Lakehurst, NJ gave a special presentation in the Trenton vicinage. Judge Zahid N. Quraishi served as the keynote speaker.

Danny's Pantry

On July 18, 2024, "Danny's Pantry", named in honor of the son of Judge Esther Salas and Mark Anderl, opened in Newark, NJ. The pantry, spearheaded by Judge Madeline Cox Arleo, was created to assist families in need who have connections to the court.

Specifically, the pantry will support rehabilitation initiatives by extending its reach to New Jersey Pretrial Opportunity Program participants and other community members who appear in court. The pantry will offer free, non-perishable food and other essential items, including personal care and baby products, to individuals and families in need. On November 21, 2024 the Camden vicinage celebrated the grand opening of the second location of Danny's Pantry in New Jersey. The Trenton vicinage will host a grand opening of the third location on April 9, 2025.

Partnering With the Legal Community

Our Judges in the District of New Jersey continue to work with the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey to produce and present informational and educational programs to the legal community throughout the year.

January 25, 2024: Virtual Brown Bag Luncheon – Cracking the AI Code

AFBNJ and the USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Virtual Webinar

Judges who Participated:

- Hon. Stacey L. Meisel, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of New Jersey
- Hon. Ronald J. Hedges, (Ret.)

March 5, 2024: Virtual Brown Bag Luncheon – What the Court Expects

AFBNJ and the USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Virtual Webinar

Judges who participated:

- Hon. Karen M. Williams
- Hon. Matthew J. Skahill

May 22, 2024: Trenton Brown Bag Luncheon – Best Practices of Local Counsel

AFBNJ and the USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Clarkson S. Fisher Building and U.S. Courthouse

Judges who participated:

- Hon. Michael B. Kaplan, Chief Judge, U.S. Bankruptcy Court
- Hon. J. Brendan Day

May 22, 2024: Renew Your Commitment to Pro Bono

AFBNJ and the USDC for the District of New Jersey

Location: Martin Luther King Bldg. and U.S. Courthouse

Judges who participated:

- Hon. Jessica S. Allen
- Hon. Michael A. Hammer

July 29, 2024: Purdue Pharma: A Crash Course in Mass Torts and Bankruptcy

Location: Virtual Webinar

Judges who participated:

- Hon. Michael B. Kaplan, Chief Judge, U.S. Bankruptcy Court
- Hon. Mark Falk, (ret.)

September 23, 2024: POWER Act: Domestic Violence Victim Representation Information Session

Location: Virtual Webinar

Judges who participated:

- Hon. Elizabeth A. Pascal
- Hon. Matthew J. Skahill

November 15, 2024: Chapter 13 Symposium

Location: Grand Marquis, Old Bridge

Judges who participated:

- Hon. Michael B. Kaplan, Chief Judge, U.S. Bankruptcy Court
- Hon. Andrew B. Altenburg
- Hon. Vincent F. Papalia

Additional Community Activities

The ETHICS Committee, made up of members of the Clerks' Offices of the District and Bankruptcy Courts coordinated the following in 2024:

- March 2024: Arm in Arm -Volunteer at the food pantry - restocking shelves

and making bags

- May 2024: Homefront - Diaper Drive
- July 2024: Salvation Army - Birthday Cake Kits
- August 2024: Children's Home Society - Back to School Drive
- November 2024: Thanksgiving Baskets for the Re-entry Court Program-Donating left over items for Danny's Pantry

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 2024.

ANNUAL DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The District Court of the Virgin Islands *Fourteenth Annual District Conference—The Practice of Law In the New Age*, was held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at the Westin Beach Resort and Spa at Frenchman's Reef on St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. In total, 141 attendees participated. This conference is the Territory's single largest legal seminar and provides Continuing Legal Education credits to members of the Bar. The Keynote Speaker for the conference was R. Polk Wagner, Professor of Law at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School who presented on "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of the Legal System." Professor Wagner teaches courses in intellectual property, patent law, and contracts. He has also published extensively and presented widely in the areas of patent law, patent policy, and innovation, and welcomed the opportunity to speak to the Virgin Islands Bar. Highlights of the program also included presentations from two of our veteran presenters, while we welcomed a few new participants. Dean Erwin Chemerinsky rendered the "Supreme Court Round-Up," and Professor Laurie L. Levenson addressed "Ethical Duties in the Age of Artificial Intelligence and other Hot Topics for the Ethical Lawyer." The Honorable Kent A. Jordan and the Honorable Cheryl A. Krause, both Circuit Judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, provided "Tips for Practicing Before the Third Circuit in the New Age" moderated by the Honorable Robert A. Molloy, U.S. Chief District Judge. The Honorable Ruth Miller, U.S. Magistrate Judge, moderated the case presentation of "Showdown at the O.K. Corral: The Trial of Wyatt Earp."

BROWN BAG LUNCHEON

Each year the Court hosts quarterly luncheons known as the 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 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 thereby giving all attorneys in the district an equal opportunity to attend, participate, and earn Continuing Legal Education credits. The meetings were held on March 7, 2024, and June 6, 2024.

PRO BONO TO EMPOWER AND REPRESENT ACT OF 2018 (POWER ACT)

The Pro Bono Work to Empower and Represent Act of 2018 (POWER Act) Forum, was held virtually on July 19, 2024. This year's forum was co-sponsored with 54 other District Courts across the nation and members of the legal community and the public were invited to attend. The forum had 1,483 registered participants, 25 of whom were from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Chief District Judge Laura Taylor Swain of the Southern District of New York delivered the opening remarks and panel introduction, highlighting the opportunity the Power Act provides for federal courts to engage with the community and advocate for survivors. She noted the lack of exposure many federal courts have to domestic violence cases due to jurisdictional constraints, underscoring the importance of learning from survivors' experiences. The panel members included Ginger T. Rex, Actress and Author; Trina Clemans, Activist; Brenda Golden, Lawyer; and Erin Helfert-Moesse, Advocate.

Trina Clemans was the first panelist to address the attendees. She shared her compelling story of survival and her legal journey, which began in 1991. She detailed her experiences with abuse in what should have been a creative learning environment, her collaborative efforts with fellow survivors, and the long, arduous process of seeking justice. Clemans described the eight-year struggle to gain attention from law enforcement and social services, illustrating the systemic challenges faced by victims.

Clemans emphasized the importance of resilience, determination, and the foundational skills acquired through her training as a dancer, which helped her navigate the complexities of the justice system. Ultimately, her persistence led to the conviction of her abuser in a federal case, highlighting both the difficulties and eventual triumphs that can emerge from advocacy. Through her experiences, she has cultivated a profound sense of hope and purpose, continuing to work towards preventing future abuses.

The second panelist, Ms. Erin Helfert-Moesse, is the visionary behind the Indiana Coalition for Crime Victims' Rights and Executive Director at Mental Health America of Hendricks County. A victim advocate and survivor, Helfert-Moesse took the floor to share her personal journey. She recounted her experiences with revictimization throughout her childhood and early adulthood, emphasizing the prevalence of such trauma and the importance of self-care for survivors. Her advocacy work began after her

own assaults, leading her to recognize the systemic failures victims face when seeking justice. She detailed her empowering decision to file a police report after her 2012 assault, contrasting it with her previous experiences where victims were often treated dismissively by law enforcement. She also provided the jarring statistics that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men experience sexual assault in the U.S. and urged survivors in attendance to practice self-care.

Helfer-Moesse founded the Indiana Coalition for Crime Victims' Rights as a response to the lack of support for victims across Indiana, emphasizing the need for victim rights awareness and enforcement in the legal system. She stressed the critical role lawyers play in advocating for victims and the necessity of pro bono legal services, which can save lives and help victims secure protective orders. Her partnership with organizations like the National Crime Victims Law Institute illustrated the collaborative efforts needed to ensure victims receive the legal support they deserve. Closing her remarks, Helfer-Moesse reaffirmed her dedication to helping others heal through advocacy, inviting legal professionals to reach out for further engagement.

Ginger T. Rex, the third panelist, recounted her harrowing experience with the justice system following a violent assault. Initially filled with hope that justice would be served, she expressed her profound disillusionment as time passed without resolution. Rex shared her frustrations with law enforcement, detailing how her attempts to communicate with police were met with delays and neglect, leaving her feeling abandoned by the very system designed to protect her. After years of perseverance, she found support through the FBI, facilitated by a personal connection, which ultimately helped her navigate her case more effectively.

Rex also highlighted significant gaps in state laws regarding sexual violence, emphasizing that some offenses are met with shockingly lenient penalties. This disparity fueled her advocacy for stronger legislative measures aimed at ensuring justice for victims. She passionately called for the establishment of a national network to connect survivors with pro bono lawyers who could assist them in navigating the often confusing and daunting legal system. Rex stressed that raising public awareness about these issues is crucial to achieving meaningful change and protecting victims from repeat offenders.

Brenda Golden, the fourth and final panelist is a member of the Muskogee Creek Nation, and an attorney dedicated to advocating for Indigenous rights. Golden's presentation shed light on the definition of Indian Country, the prevalence of domestic violence within these communities, and the significant challenges faced in providing legal services. She highlighted alarming statistics, noting that over 84% of Native American women experience physical violence in their lifetime, while non-Native offenders represent a significant portion of perpetrators.

Golden emphasized the lack of resources available to victims in “Indian Country,” citing the underfunding of the Indian Health Service and the geographical barriers that limit access to medical and legal support. She discussed how the historical context of intergenerational trauma, stemming from experiences like forced removals and boarding schools, exacerbates the issue, perpetuating cycles of violence that are challenging to disrupt. Furthermore, Golden highlighted the jurisdictional complexities that complicate the pursuit of justice, especially in cases involving non-Native offenders.

Throughout the discussion, the need for greater legal representation in Indigenous communities was evident. With only a small fraction of attorneys identifying as Native American, there is a critical gap in the availability of legal services for victims of domestic violence. Golden called for broader support and collaboration from the legal community to fill this void, emphasizing the importance of pro bono work to empower and uplift those in need.

The event concluded with Chief Judge Swain thanking all speakers for their impactful contributions and encouraging participants to consider the needs of survivors and Indigenous communities in their legal practices. She emphasized the importance of pro bono work in addressing issues of safety and equality and expressed hope that attendees would be inspired to act in their communities.

NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES

A total of 373 people became new citizens of the United States through Naturalization Ceremonies held at the District Court of the Virgin Islands during the year. The St. Thomas/St. John Division held 11 ceremonies and administered 272 oaths, while the St. Croix Division held 6 ceremonies and administered 101 oaths.

CASE MANAGEMENT/ELECTRONIC CASE FILES SYSTEM(CM/ECF)

The annual Case Management/Electronic Case Files System (CM/ECF) training was held on August 2, 2024, 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 1.8 technology hours of Continuing Legal Education credits for their attendance at the training sessions.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson III

On January 11, 2024, Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson III, served as a guest speaker at the Eddie Ortiz Annual Three Kings Day Traditions event, dedicated to promoting social and educational enrichment to the youth of the Virgin Islands.

On April 9, 2024, the District Court of the Virgin Islands in conjunction with the College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences at the University of the Virgin Islands hosted a “Fireside Chat” celebrating the 70th Anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education, with Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson, III, serving as the moderator. Magistrate Judge Henderson took the audience on a step-by-step journey from 1896 to 1954 by asking questions to a panel of experts that included Magistrate Judge Ruth Miller, Chief Disciplinary Counsel Tanisha Bailey-Roka, Esq., and District Court of the Virgin Islands Librarian Aesha Duval. Over 100 students from local high schools on St. Croix and St. Thomas along with students from the University of the Virgin Islands Pre-Law Organization attended.

Magistrate Judge Henderson’s additional engagements include serving as a panelist for the University of the Virgin Islands Pre-Law Organization’s program on careers in law entitled “What Do Lawyers Do?” held on April 5, 2024; serving as a panelist for the Robes in Schools Program coordinated by the Federal Magistrate Judges Association’s Diversity Committee held on July 17, 2024 in New Orleans; providing remarks at the Ground Breaking for Community Youth Basketball Court sponsored by the Eddie Ortiz Three Kings Organization in September 2024; serving as a guest speaker on October 11, 2024 for a Career Discussion with seniors at the St. Joseph Catholic School; serving as the Keynote Speaker at the Patronal Festival of St. John Anglican Church on October 20, 2024; and reading to the third-grade class at Juanita Gardine K–8 School on December 11, 2024. Magistrate Judge Henderson also gave remarks to students who toured the St. Croix courthouse in 2024.

District Judge Wilma A. Lewis

On December 12, 2024, the District Court of the Virgin Islands hosted a panel on St. Thomas at the Ron de Lugo Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse for members of the legal community. The panel featured the Honorable D. Michael Fisher, Senior Circuit Judge, and the Honorable Tamika Montgomery-Reeves, Circuit Judge. With District Judge Wilma A. Lewis serving as mistress of ceremonies, Judges Fisher and Montgomery-Reeves provided tips on Third Circuit practice. Following the discussion, the Judges and members of the audience engaged in a Q&A segment.

SCHOOL TOURS

On March 14, 2024, students enrolled in foreign languages and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the St. Croix Central High School began their tour of the District Court of the Virgin Islands, Division of St. Croix, with a visit to the U.S. Marshals Service. Thereafter, students visited the courtroom, where members of the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services discussed their agency's role in the criminal justice system.

The students then had the opportunity to experience the formal opening of a court proceeding, after which District Judge Wilma A. Lewis invited each student to the podium to introduce themselves and share their career goals. Following this segment, Judge Lewis spoke to the students about the federal judiciary and the differences between the local and federal courts. Assistant U.S. Attorney Rhonda Williams-Henry and Assistant Federal Public Defender Lisa Brown Williams spoke to the students about their respective career roles, answered questions, and gave words of advice. Thereafter, the students engaged in conversation with Judge Lewis.

On March 27, 2024, approximately 60 sixth graders from the Ricardo Richards Elementary School toured the District Court of the Virgin Islands, Division of St. Croix, and heard presentations from the U.S. Marshals Service, Third Circuit Libraries, and the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services, about their respective roles in the judicial system. District Judge Wilma A. Lewis and Magistrate Judge Emile A. Henderson III discussed the judicial process and the importance of jury service.

THE RULES 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 is the Right to a Jury Trial Important?"

Seven schools participated in the Virgin Islands: All Saints Cathedral School and Joseph A. Gomez Elementary School on St. Thomas; Julius E. Sprauve School on St. John; and Alfredo Andrews Elementary School, Church of God Holiness Academy, Good Hope Country Day School, and St. Croix Christian Academy on St. Croix. The essays submitted were evaluated by the District and Magistrate Judges for focus, content development, organization, and style.

On May 9, 2024, 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. Crystal Archibald's 6th grade class at the Church of God Holiness Academy; the second-place winner was Mrs. Dahlia Knowles' 5th and 6th grade Gifted and Talented Class at the Alfredo Andrews Elementary School; and the third-place winner was Mrs. Laurie Bohlke and Mrs. Maureen William's 6th grade Advisory G class at the Good Hope Country Day School. All essay submissions were outstanding and reflected the great amount of time, thought, and effort that students and teachers dedicated to this contest.

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.

THE RENDELL CENTER FOR CIVICS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This year, numerous judges in the Philadelphia Courthouse serving on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and the U.S. Court of Appeals participated as judges for fifteen (15) appellate moot courts and mock trials conducted by The Rendell Center for Civics and Civic Engagement. The grades of the students ranged from 3rd grade to 12th grade and these students came from all over the five-county area. The topics touched on several areas of law including First Amendment free speech, cyber bullying, and the use of social media in schools.

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

May 16, 2025