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President's Column

Jim McKay

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McKay, Jim, "President's Column" (2009). *Court Review: The Journal of the American Judges Association*.
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President's Column

Jim McKay

I was elected to the Orleans Parish Criminal District Court in December 1982. A great many changes have been made in regards to the judiciary in these past 28 years.

At the time I took office the citizens' perception of judges was that they were honorable men and women in a highly respectable position. Oh, how perceptions can change. I am still working with the same type of honorable men and women—the only thing that has changed is the public perception. What caused this you may ask; well, that could be the grist for many law review articles. Although only 30 percent of our population can tell you who the Chief Justice of our United States Supreme Court is, what is clearer today than ever before is that the public is more aware of judges and what they do.

Well before the Supreme Court's 2000 ruling in *Bush v. Gore*, the press was taking a keen interest in what our job entails and what effect our decisions may have on the lives of citizens. In the many states that elect their judiciary, very rarely does a day go by that a judicial decision—either criminal or civil—is not published on the front pages of the tabloids. Even in the states that have an appointed judiciary, the public interest has multiplied ten-fold. This scrutiny has affected every level of our state judiciaries from traffic court

with their MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) observers to paid court watchers in district courts tracking cases. I think the founders of our country would be both shocked and dismayed over the microscopic approach that the press has taken toward our courts.

There are some in this country who appreciate this accountability process for the judiciary. I am sure that these folks believe that this type of scrutiny makes better citizens of us all.

But when young men or women consider seeking judicial office, they should be aware of this type of scrutiny before they make their decision.

Hopefully in the future our organization will continue to grapple with these changes and public perceptions and help to educate the bench and bar, as well as the public, about the evolution of the judiciary. It will be curious to see in the future what type of judicial timber will gravitate

toward the bench. With this new fishbowl approach, the ability to make just decisions while knowing that the population is looking over your shoulder will be paramount. Only time will tell what type of individuals will bloom under this type of system. I would like to be around.

God Bless all.



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April 14-16
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