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President's Column

Toni M. Higginbotham

The American Judges Association is pleased to salute the work of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts through this special issue of *Court Review*. The Consortium is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a conference being held March 20 to 23 in Washington, D.C.

This cooperative effort between the AJA and the Consortium is typical of the ways in which AJA partners with—and helps to spread the reach of—other organizations interested in similar objectives. One of the members of the Consortium's Board of Directors, Liz Neeley, is also a member of *Court Review's* Editorial Board. She approached *Court Review's* coeditors, Steve Leben, a past AJA president, and Professor Alan Tomkins, about this collaborative effort. In keeping with the AJA's long tradition of working with other groups, they readily agreed.

Among the AJA's great strengths are its flexibility to respond to situations and its willingness to collaborate with other organizations. The AJA is an independent association, not a subgroup of a larger entity, and we have not divided our organization into separate groups for different segments of our membership. AJA's member judges are found throughout the United States, and we also have a significant number of Canadian judges as members. We are mainly state and municipal judges, but we also have federal judges as members. We encourage our officers, our Board of Governors, our education planners, and our publication editors to be active and innovative. When contacted by the Consortium, the AJA was able to collaborate easily and effectively because of our organizational structure and track record.

Over the years, the AJA has engaged in joint ventures with many different groups. We have worked closely over the years with the National Center for State Courts, including projects like devoting a special issue of *Court Review* to the National Center-sponsored conference on public trust and confidence in the courts. We held a joint meeting with the National Association for Court Management, and we are working on a

joint meeting with the National Association of State Judicial Educators. We have combined our annual educational conference with the state judiciaries in several states in recent years, enhancing the programming offered both at our conference and to judges in those states.

I raise the subject of the AJA's collaborative work with other organizations so that readers of this special issue—AJA members and others—may keep in mind the possibility of future collaboration on issues of interest. We are always glad to hear

from AJA members about suggested initiatives, projects, or educational efforts that the AJA might pursue. We are also glad to hear from those presently outside the AJA membership as well. And, of course, we would also love to bring more of you who are not currently AJA members into our group.

Our dues are a reasonable \$150 for active judges (\$50 for retired judges). Members receive quarterly issues of *Court Review*, regular email updates on issues of interest to judges (like new ethics cases or advisory opinions), and our electronic newsletter, *Benchmark*, which reports on AJA activities. You also become part of an active association that works to make its members better judges and the judiciary even better at providing justice. And you can attend the AJA's annual educational conferences. No other organization has provided better judicial education programs over an extended period of time than the American Judges Association, which recently held its 50th annual educational conference.

So we salute the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts on the work it has done during its 25 years in existence. We are glad that the Consortium reached out to the AJA to collaborate with it. We hope that those who read this issue—AJA members and others—will keep AJA in mind as you think about ways in which the performance of judges and their courts may be improved.

I hope to see you at an AJA conference soon.

