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# The Resource Page

## Alaska Court System Adopts Fairness Pledge

<http://goo.gl/qHArx>

Under the leadership of Chief Justice Dana Fabe, the Alaska judiciary has posted a new fairness pledge in courthouses throughout the state. Fabe announced the pledge in her January State of the Judiciary address to the Alaska Legislature. She began by discussing the public's expectation of fairness in court, and she continued by contrasting a typical courthouse with a typical hospital:

[I]f you go into a hospital lobby, you will often notice a sign containing a clear statement of your rights as a patient: that you are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and to have your questions answered. Alaskans who come to court should have the same assurances. So today, I announce a pledge to each litigant, defendant, victim, witness, juror, or other person who is involved in a court proceeding: The judge and court staff will listen to you, treat you with respect, and respond to your questions. We will post this pledge in every courthouse in the state.

It may seem simple and obvious, but it is our belief that this pledge of fairness, consistently offered and openly displayed, will go a long way to remind everyone in our courthouses that ensuring fairness is an

active process, for which there are no short cuts. Courtrooms must be places that foster understanding and respect for our laws, for the people affected by them, and for the judges who endeavor to uphold them. They must be places that help bring a sense of clarity, community connection, and confidence that justice will be served. It is within this spirit that we reaffirm to the people of Alaska that listening, respecting, and explaining are the hallmarks of what justice requires.

The Internet link shown above will take you to a column by Chief Justice Fabe providing additional background about the fairness pledge, which has been placed in each of Alaska's 44 courthouses. The pledge is printed in English as well as six other languages.

### Trends in State Courts 2013

<http://www.ncsc.org/trends>

Each year, the National Center for State Courts publishes a book with short pieces by court leaders on trends in the state courts. The 2013 edition was recently published—and is available at this website along with the past editions from 2000 forward.

Topics covered in this year's print edition include:

- Improving child-protection outcomes
- Using courthouse-observation teams

to improve service

- Identifying access-to-justice issues for the poor
- Addressing human trafficking in the courts
- Integrating procedural-fairness principles into a domestic-violence docket
- Exploring steps that have been taken in New Mexico to improve alternative dispute resolution.

In addition to the print version of this publication you'll also find a new online monthly edition of *Trends*, including multimedia clips from authors to highlight and expand on their written pieces.

### 23rd National College on Judicial Conduct and Ethics

October 23-25, 2013

Chicago, Illinois

<http://www.ajs.org>

Nothing is more important to maintaining public confidence in the judiciary than making sure that judges comport themselves with integrity. Yet judicial-ethics programming is usually interspersed into a lengthy set of educational programs for judges and may not get the attention it deserves.

Most judges can benefit from a more intensive review of judicial-ethics rules and current issues in judicial ethics and discipline. Toward that end, the American Judicature Society sponsors its annual National College on Judicial Conduct and Ethics—and the 23rd annual conference will be held October 23-25 in Chicago.

The gathering provides a forum for judges, staff of judicial-conduct commissions, judicial-ethics-advisory committees, and others to discuss the ethics rules for judges, with a focus on the areas that cause specific problems. Sessions at this year's conference will include:

- Social media and judicial ethics
- Off-bench conduct
- Pro se litigants
- Drawing the line on judicial demeanor
- Judicial disqualification

Registration fees for the conference are \$350 through August 23 (\$375 thereafter).

## PLEDGE OF FAIRNESS



The fundamental mission of the Alaska Court System is to provide a fair and impartial forum for the resolution of disputes according to the rule of law. Fairness includes the opportunity to be heard, the chance to have the court process explained, and the right to be treated with respect. The judges and staff of the Alaska Court System therefore make the following pledge to each litigant, defendant, victim, witness, juror, and person involved in a court proceeding:

We will LISTEN to you

We will respond to your QUESTIONS about court procedure

We will treat you with RESPECT