



**TITLE:** Contemporary Challenges: Attack on the Court and The New Normal

**SESSION DATE:** October 8, 2021

**SESSION TIME:** 3:15 PM – 4:30 PM

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:**

Across the nation, attacks on courts are escalating. From Unfair attack ads during election campaigns to legislative actions and proposed constitutional amendments designed to limit court authority, judicial independence is being threatened. NAWJ's Judicial Independence Committee actively monitors contemporary challenges to free and fair courts, and provides updated resources for public education and engagement with state influencers and policymakers. Learn about partnerships with other national organizations and how the work of NAWJ educational programs increase public awareness of the importance of judicial independence. Examples of successful efforts to defeat these efforts around the country will be highlighted.

We are also pleased to be ready to release in this program our new video, produced in collaboration with the ABOTA Foundation, to update the acclaimed "Free and Fair" video from 2013 (with Sandra Day O'Connor).

**PANELISTS:**



***Hon. Robin E. Hudson – Senior Associate Justice, Supreme Court of North Carolina***

Robin E. Hudson is a Georgia native, but has lived in North Carolina since her early teens. She has been serving on the Supreme Court of North Carolina since January 2007 and her current term runs through 2022. Previously, she served on the North Carolina Court of Appeals from January 2001 through December 2006. She is the first woman in North Carolina elected to either appellate court without having been appointed first.

Justice Hudson graduated from Page High School in Greensboro, then Yale University in 1973, and the University of North Carolina School of Law in 1976. She practiced law out of Raleigh and Durham until her election to the Court of Appeals. Her practice concentrated on workers' compensation and civil and criminal litigation, and included numerous appeals.

Justice Hudson was a member of the steering committee that founded the North Carolina Association of Women Attorneys in 1978, and has been a member of the organization ever since. She has served on the Family Court Advisory Committee since 2001. She has been a member of the National Association of Women Judges since 2003; since 2015 she has served as national co-chair of its Judicial Independence Committee, which oversees the award-winning "Informed Voters Project (IVP)".

She is married and has two grown children, two beautiful granddaughters and two handsome grandsons.



***Hon. Debra Stephens – Associate Justice, Supreme Court of Washington***

The Honorable Debra L. Stephens has been a member of the Washington State Supreme Court since January 2008 and served as the court's 57th chief justice. Justice Stephens previously served as a judge for Division Three of the Court of Appeals and is the first judge from that court to join the Washington State Supreme Court, as well as the first woman from Eastern Washington to do so. A native of Spokane, Washington, she practiced law and taught as an adjunct professor at Gonzaga University School of Law prior to taking the bench. She appeared as counsel over 125 times in the Washington State Supreme Court, in addition to appearances in the Idaho Supreme Court, in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, and as counsel of record in the United States Supreme Court.

Justice Stephens is deeply involved in efforts to advance justice and improve the legal system in Washington State and beyond. A leader in judicial and public education, she serves on the Washington Civic Learning Council, is a founding executive committee member of the National Courts and Sciences Institute (NCSI), and a convener for Dividing the Waters, an organization supporting judicial education on water law issues. She has been a member and co-chair of the Board for Judicial Administration, and co-chair of the COVID-19 Court Recovery Task Force. Justice Stephens is active in the National and International Association of Women Judges and co-chairs its Judicial Independence Committee.

Internationally, she works with USAID to train foreign judges on issues of judicial independence and the rule of law.

Justice Stephens has received numerous recognitions for her work, including the “Myra Bradwell Award” from the Gonzaga Women’s Law Caucus, the “Leadership & Justice Award” from MAMAS (Mother Attorneys Mentoring Association of Seattle), the “Distinguished Judicial Service Award” from Gonzaga University School of Law, and the “President’s Award” from Washington Women Lawyers. Most recently, the Board for Judicial Administration presented her the “Innovating Justice” award in recognition of her leadership of the judicial branch during the COVID-19 crisis.

Justice Stephens and her husband have been married for over 30 years and have two grown children. She comes from a large and loving family and enjoys nothing more than spending time with family at their home below Hell’s Canyon.

**PRODUCERS:**

*Hon. Robin Hudson*

*Annette Boyd Pitts*

*Hon. Debra Stephens*