



September 9, 2021
Annual Report from District 10
Honorable Cheryl A. Rios

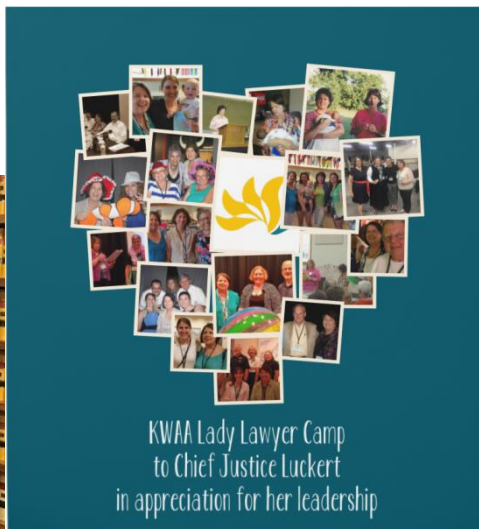
Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota

Kansas:

- Governor Laura Kelly appointed Joan Lowdon, Leavenworth Deputy County Attorney and a resident of Bonner Springs, Kansas, to the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Michael Gibbens. Joan Lowdon will be the first woman judge in the 1st Judicial District in Kansas. “I’m incredibly grateful to my community and Gov. Kelly for the opportunity to serve as a district judge,” Lowdon said in a news release. “Throughout my career I’ve been struck by the power of a judge to make a positive impact on people’s lives, especially for vulnerable children. I am eager to get to work to ensure that everyone appearing in my court is heard and that the law is applied impartially.”



- KWAA wanted to do something to honor Chief Justice Luckert in celebration of her appointment as Chief Justice. We also wanted something unique to KWAA and Lindsborg, so we presented her with this “Lady Lawyer Camp” canvas that says: “KWAA Lady Lawyer Camp to Chief Justice Luckert in appreciation for her leadership.” It includes photos from the first KWAA conference through at least the 30th Anniversary conference. Thank you, Chief, for your service to KWAA and to the legal profession.
Chief Justice Luckert also wanted to make sure to thank KWAA for nominating her for the Kansas Bar Association Christel Marquardt Trailblazer Award. The beautiful statue she is holding was presented to her by the KBA in recognition of that honor.



- Governor Kelly appointed Melissa Standridge to serve on the Kansas Supreme Court. The following is the article posted on Governor Kelly’s website: “Governor Laura Kelly today appointed Melissa Taylor Standridge to the Kansas Supreme Court. Standridge will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Carol Beier. “As governor, the process of appointing justices to the Kansas Supreme Court is one I take very seriously,” **Governor Kelly said.** “Not only must justices have knowledge of the law, but also a complex and nuanced understanding of the world and the people the law is intended to govern.” “There’s no question that Melissa has gathered a wealth of legal expertise that makes her more than prepared to join the Supreme Court. But there’s more to her unique career trajectory and life experience that makes her a perfect fit for our state’s highest court. “As a foster and adoptive parent, she has firsthand experience navigating the system both as a judge, and as a foster parent to numerous youngsters, doing her best to provide security, stability and love to kids who sorely needed it.

“The totality of her life and career experience makes her preeminently qualified to sit on the Kansas Supreme Court.” Standridge has been a judge on the Kansas Court of Appeals since 2008, where she has heard thousands of cases and authored nearly one thousand opinions. Previously, from 1999 to 2008, she served as chambers counsel to U.S. District Magistrate Judge David Waxse. Before her tenure as chambers counsel to Judge Waxse, Standridge worked as an associate attorney for Shook, Hardy, and Bacon – one of the premier Kansas City firms – and was a founding member of the firm’s award-winning diversity and inclusion initiative.

Standridge received a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Kansas in 1984, going on to pursue her law degree at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law. During her tenure at UMKC, she served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Law Review and the student leader of the Moot Court program, graduating in 1993. Standridge has received numerous awards for her performance, including the Outstanding Service Award from the Kansas Bar Association, the Sandra Day O’Connor Award for Professional Service from the American Inns of Court, and in 2006 she was selected as Kansas City Leader of the Year by “The Daily Record.” Additionally, in 2007, her work enriching the lives of children earned her the Angel in Adoption award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. “To serve on our state’s highest court is the honor of a lifetime – but I don’t view joining the Supreme Court as just a capstone to my career,” **Standridge said.** “The justices of our Supreme Court have difficult jobs. So I am keenly aware that my appointment is more than just moving my office from the second floor of the judicial center to the third floor. “But I believe that my years as a judge on the Court of Appeals, my extensive experience working with judges and lawyers from across our state, and my broad life experiences outside the law have prepared me for this challenge.”



- The [9th Judicial District Nominating Commission](#) has selected Ellen Neufeld to fill a district magistrate judge vacancy in McPherson County.

The commission conducted public interviews of nominees by videoconference January 12. Neufeld's new position will be effective on her swearing in. She is an Inman attorney. The 9th Judicial District is composed of Harvey and McPherson counties. The vacancy was created by Judge Steve Hilgers' January 8 retirement.



- On January 21, Amy Cline was appointed to the Kansas Court of Appeal to fill the vacancy created by retired Judge G. Joseph Pierron Jr. The Governor noted that “Ms. Cline has worked diligently representing homeowners, consumers, farmers, workers and small businesses across Kansas. She will bring her breadth of experience to the Court of Appeals where I am certain she will be a fair and open-minded jurist.” Cline has spent her career arguing a wide variety of cases including, consumer protection, construction, employment, personal injury and business disputes and has presented to both the Kansas Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. She’s also devoted her time to serving the community through the Girl Scouts of the Kansas Heartland and the Wichita Salvation Army, leading various bar associations, and participating in women’s legal groups. Cline stated: “I thank Governor Kelly for the opportunity to serve Kansas and the rule of law on the Court of Appeals, I’m honored to work with its distinguished jurists,”

The Kansas Court of Appeals nominating committee had forwarded three female judicial candidates for Governor Kelly’s consideration, including Cline and Wichita attorneys Diane H. Sorensen and Marcia Wood. Currently 4 of the 14 judges on the Kansas Court of Appeals are women, with 2 current vacancies.



- Governor Laura Kelly appointed Lesley A. Isherwood to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of former Court of Appeals judge Steve Leben. Isherwood lives in Wichita and is a Senior Assistant District Attorney in Sedgwick County.
“Ms. Isherwood has devoted her career to serving Kansans as a prosecutor, and she has become one of the most experienced appellate litigators in our state,” **Governor Kelly said.** “She will bring to the Court of Appeals not only that wealth of experience but also a love of her community and of serving others. She will be an excellent Court of Appeals judge.”
Isherwood has been a prosecutor in Sedgwick County since 1999 and now serves as a Senior Assistant District Attorney in the Appellate Division. She has argued more than 100 cases before Kansas appellate courts and has authored over 1,000 appellate briefs. Upon graduating from Washburn University School of Law in 1998, she

briefly practiced law at Williams, Stroble, Malone, Mason & Ralph, P.A., in Dodge City. She earned her B.A. in English, with honors, from Washburn University in 1995. Isherwood serves her community with the Kansas Children's Service League, the Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland, and she has served in leadership positions with the Junior League of Wichita and Dress for Success. She is a member of the National District Attorney's Association, the Kansas County and District Attorneys Association, and the Wichita Bar Association. In 2012, the Wichita Business Journal named her to its "40 Under 40" list.

"I have enormous respect for the judges of the Court of Appeals, and I am honored to have the opportunity to serve alongside them," **Isherwood said.** "As a prosecutor, I've approached the law as an advocate for public safety, but part of my job as an appellate attorney has been to see the law and the facts from multiple perspectives. My job as a Court of Appeals judge will be to sort through those perspectives and ensure that in each case the law is applied as written, fairly and without bias."

Isherwood's appointment is subject to Senate confirmation and her materials are being forwarded to the Senate. Before 2013, Court of Appeals judges were not subject to Senate confirmation and were selected by the governor from a group of finalists named by the Supreme Court Nominating Commission. Because Governor Kelly favors that merit-based selection process, she created the Court of Appeals Nominating Commission, a committee of knowledgeable lawyers and non-lawyers tasked with recommending finalists for the Court of Appeals vacancy.



- Jacy Hurst was appointed to the Kansas Court of Appeals. Hurst will be the first woman of color on the Court of Appeals. A Lawrence resident, she is a partner with the law firm Kutak Rock LLP in Kansas City, Missouri. Much of her legal career was spent representing businesses in the employment, health care and regulatory areas. She has also provided pro bono legal services to individuals in criminal and family law cases. However, her experience with the courts system came much earlier, growing up in a single-mother family with parents who didn't graduate college. "As a child, I experienced divorce, violence, homelessness, poverty early on, and those were my introductions to the law," Hurst said at her confirmation hearing. "That's where I met my first lawyers and judges." She said her experiences led her to volunteer at a domestic violence shelter, and all that drove her to practice law.



- District 10 Director, Cheryl Rios, received the MANA Ring of Honor Award from MANA, A National Latina Organization. In honor of Women’s History Month, MANA recognized the rapidly growing number of MANA women who have served or now serve in an elected or appointed office of public trust.



- District 10 Director, Cheryl Rios, received the Chief Justice Kay McFarland Award: In 2006, the Women Attorneys Association of Topeka created the Chief Justice Kay McFarland Award to honor her many accomplishments in the legal field. The award recognizes an individual who has achieved professional excellence in her field and has influenced other women to pursue legal careers, opened doors for women lawyers in a variety of job settings that historically were closed to them, or advanced opportunities for women within a practice area or segment of the profession.

- Gov. Laura Kelly appointed Garden City private practice attorney Kristi Cott to the 25th Judicial District court vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Ricklin Pierce. “Kristi is a dedicated, professional, and knowledgeable attorney with extensive experience in the judicial system. I am confident Kristi’s experience and her commitment to the law will serve the 25th Judicial District well,” Kelly said. “I’ve spent my career both defending the rights of the accused as a defense attorney and promoting public safety as a prosecutor,” Kristi Cott said. “And over the last year in private practice I’ve broadened my experience to include a variety of civil cases. As a district judge I will put that experience to work every day to ensure that every person in my courtroom is heard and every decision I make is fair and follows the law without bias or prejudice.” The 25th District consists of Finney, Greeley, Hamilton, Kearny, Scott, and Wichita counties. Rebecca Sanders was awarded The Carol Foreman Medal of Civility Award in 2020 but was honored for this in 2021. The Carol Foreman Medal of Civility is reserved to recognize an individual who is a practicing lawyer or judge in Kansas. The recipient must have behaved and carried out the professional actions and duties as a lawyer or judge with civility, ethics, and respect to others at all times, such that the individual serves as an example of dignity and honor to our legal profession. Only one individual may be selected for this recognition each year. Though nominations may be submitted each year; this honor may not necessarily be awarded each year by KWAA. Rather, it shall only be given when the Committee has determined that of the nominations received, there is a truly worthy recipient who meets all of the criteria.



- On July 1, 2021 NAWJ member, Cheryl Whelan became the president of the Kansas Bar Association. Whelan, who is Director of the Office of Administrative Hearings has broad experience through her military service and legal work. Whelan was also recently appointed to serve on NAWJ's Administrative Judiciary Committee and Military/Veteran Judges Committee.



- Judge Penny Moylan was appointed to the Judicial Education Advisory Committee. The Judicial Education Advisory Committee recommends and organizes education and training programs for Kansas appellate judges, district judges, and district magistrate judges. Members include judges from each of the state's six judicial departments, a representative from the Office of Judicial Administration, and an appellate judge.



- Judge Sally Pokorny was reappointed to a four-year term on the Judges Assistance Committee. The committee provides help to any Kansas judge in need due to mental or physical disability, or addiction.



- Judge Marilyn Wilder was appointed to serve as chief judge of the 9th Judicial District from September 19 through December 31.



- Judge Lori Bolton Fleming was appointed to serve as chief judge of the 11th Judicial District from June 1 through December 31.



- Karen Arnold-Burger, chief judge of the Kansas Court of Appeals, is the 2021 recipient of the Robert L. Gernon Award presented by the Kansas Continuing Legal Education Board.

Established in 2005, the Gernon Award recognizes individuals or organizations demonstrating a unique commitment to legal education for lawyers in Kansas and for providing outstanding service to continuing legal education.

Arnold-Burger was nominated by the Kansas Women Attorney's Association, the Women Attorneys Association of Topeka and Chief Justice Marla Luckert. In the nomination letters, all highlighted the impact Judge Arnold-Burger has had on the legal profession in Kansas.

"Chief Judge Arnold Burger has a gift for engaging all of these audiences, delivering her educational tonic in the most entertaining way, as evidenced by the near constant demand for her appearances," Luckert said in her nomination.

Arnold-Burger has presented over 118 continuing legal education and continuing judicial education programs in the past 10 years, the Women Attorneys Association of Topeka said in its nomination.

"As lawyers and judges our lives are so busy," Arnold-Burger said. "Continuing legal education really forces us to stay up-to-date in our substantive areas of law and reminds us of the importance of ethical behavior.

Arnold-Burger also mentioned that she enjoys finding topics that fit into the "we don't know what we don't know," category, and that she loves seeing lawyers and judges experience that "aha" moment.

Arnold-Burger graduated with a degree in political science and psychology from the University of Kansas in 1979 and from the University of Kansas School of Law in 1981. She was a municipal court judge for 20 years in Overland Park before joining the Kansas Court of Appeals in 2011.

She has served as president of the Kansas Municipal Judges Association, Earl E. O'Connor Inn of Court, and the Johnson County Bar Association, as well as a member of the American Bar Association, University Kansas School of Law Board of Governors, and the National Judicial College Faculty Council.

Justice Robert Gernon served on the Kansas Supreme Court from 2003 until his death in 2005 and previously on the Kansas Court of Appeals from 1988 to 2003. He worked to improve the training, education, and professionalism of attorneys in Kansas and across the nation.

“Judge Arnold-Burger inspires us all to be better,” said the Kansas Women Attorneys Association in its nominating letter. “She lives up to Justice Gernon’s memory and the standards he set for us all.”



North Dakota:

- North Dakota will host a virtual presentation regarding the life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice McEvers will provide a virtual copy of the NAWJ pamphlet to the panel.

I DISSENT: An Event Honoring the Legacy of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was held on Friday, December 11, 2020 from 3:00 p.m. to 5 p.m. via electronic means. The program was sponsored by the Women’s Lawyers Section of the State Bar Association of North Dakota and the Law Women’s Caucus of the University of North Dakota School of Law. The event was moderated by University of North Dakota School of Law Prof. Denitsa Mavrova Heinrich, also the President of the Women’s Lawyers Section, who summarized Justice Ginsburg’s career and her many contributions to the law and advancing human rights. The event featured retired and sitting judges and justices who discussed and analyzed some of Justice Ginsburg’s most groundbreaking decisions and compelling dissents, and the effects they had on shaping the law and our society.

The following decisions and dissents of Justice Ginsburg were discussed: *United States v. Virginia*, by Magistrate Judge Alice Senechal of the United States District Court for the District of North Dakota; *Bush v. Gore*, by Justice Carol Ronning Kapsner, retired Justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court; *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, by Justice Lisa Fair McEvers, Justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court; *Gonzales v. Carhart*, by Justice Mary Meuhlen Maring, retired Justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court; *Shelby County v. Holder*, by Magistrate Judge Karen Klein, retired United States Magistrate Judge for the District of North Dakota; and *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, by Judge Shon Hastings, Chief United States Bankruptcy Judge for the District of North Dakota.

The event was well attended with over 125 judges, lawyers and law students participating in the event.

- Katie Carpenter, former law clerk of Justice McEvers, wrote a law review article regarding women’s suffrage in North Dakota. Justice McEvers assisted Ms. Carpenter with the article. The article can be found here: The North Dakota Law Review recently published Volume 95, Issue 3. The online version is available on the UND School of Law’s website.
Link to Volume 95, Issue 3: <https://law.und.edu/law-review/issues/95/3.html>

- East Central Judicial District Judge Stephannie N. Stiel chambered in Fargo, North Dakota gave the convocation address as the University of North Dakota School of Law welcomed a new class of students August 15, 2021. Judge Stiel spoke to the students about the importance of professionalism and civility and cultivating these habits beginning in law school. She also led the students in their Pledge of Professionalism. President Andy Armacost, Dean Michael McGinniss and Dean Brad Parrish were also involved in the event, which included a pinning ceremony in which each student was given a special pin to commemorate their future graduation class of 2024.



Minnesota:

- ***“For the first time in state history, all chief judges serving on Minnesota’s appellate and executive branch courts are women”***

[ST. PAUL, MN] – Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan today announced that the Minnesota Tax Court has unanimously voted for Wendy S. Tien to assume responsibility as Chief Judge effective March 17, 2021. Judge Tien has served on the Tax Court since her appointment by Governor Walz on November 13, 2019. For the first time in Minnesota history, the chiefs of the Minnesota Supreme Court, the Minnesota Court of Appeals, and all three Executive Branch Courts are all women: Chief Justice Lorie Gildea, Minnesota Supreme Court; Chief Judge Susan Segal, Minnesota Court of Appeals; Chief Judge Jenny Starr, Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings; Chief Judge Patricia Milun, Minnesota Workers’ Compensation Court of Appeals; and Chief Judge Wendy Tien, Minnesota Tax Court.

“I applaud the selection of Judge Tien as Chief Judge of the Minnesota Tax Court. As a remarkable jurist and leader with a strong dedication to public service, I have no doubt Judge Tien will make an excellent chief,” said Governor Walz. **“I am also proud to celebrate a more representative democracy today. With women now presiding over Minnesota’s appellate and executive branch courts as chief judges, this is a historic moment for our state.”**

“For the first time in our state’s history, these Minnesota courts are all led by all women at the same time,” said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. **“Representation on the bench matters, and a more diverse**

judicial branch equates to a more representative government for our communities. I am proud to see such distinguished women serving Minnesotans as chief judges.” (Found at: <https://mn.gov/governor/administration/judicialappointments/judicialnews.jsp?id=472366>)

You can also read another article at: <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2021/03/16/women-now-hold-all-chief-judicial-seats-on-minnesota-executive-branch-and-appellate-courts/>



Nebraska:

- Nebraska County Court Judge Linda Caster Senff, 5th Judicial District, announced her retirement effective October 31, 2020. Senff was appointed to the bench in 2005 and was retained in her position by area voters, most recently in 2014. In her letter to the Governor and Chief Justice, Senff noted, “I am honored to have been part of the Nebraska Judicial Branch which is full of dedicated judges, lawyers and staff seeking to provide legal services and access to justice for everyone.” During her 15 years on the bench, Senff volunteered on committees for both the Nebraska Supreme Court and the County Judges Association, including service on the Judicial Ethics Committee, Committee on Children and the Courts, and a select 2018 leadership group of judges working to provide consistent and transparent court records. She is a Nebraska State Bar Foundation Fellow, an honor based on the integrity and character of legal professionals who are dedicated to improving the administration of justice.
- On September 16, 2020, Governor Pete Ricketts appointed Candice J. Novak of Omaha to the Separate Juvenile Court of Douglas County, Nebraska. Novak, 41, has served as a court-appointed attorney and guardian ad litem in Douglas County and Sarpy County juvenile courts since 2005. She has also served as a guardian ad litem in probate and custody matters in both Douglas and Sarpy counties. Novak holds a Bachelor of Arts in Paralegal Studies from the College of St. Mary and a Juris Doctor from the Creighton University School of Law. She is a member of the Nebraska Bar Association, American Bar Association, and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. She also serves as Nebraska State Coordinator for the National Association of Counsel for Children. Additionally, Novak co-founded the Nebraska Guardian ad Litem Project in 2015 to promote excellence in Guardian ad Litem advocacy through training and education for licensed attorneys in Juvenile Courts in Nebraska. Novak is active in the community as a member of the St. Joan of Arc school board and home and school association. She regularly volunteers for the P.A.C.E. program, which serves at-risk youth in the community. She has also worked with organizations such as Boys Town, Child Saving Institute, and St. Francis Ministries to provide foster parent education.



- On December 14, 2020, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts appointed Michelle “Shellie” Sabata of Lincoln to the Separate Juvenile Court of Lancaster County. Sabata, 49, has served as Deputy County Attorney in the Lancaster County Attorney’s Office since 1998. As Deputy County Attorney, her primary duties included reviewing investigations to make charging decisions in law violation and abuse/neglect cases on behalf of juveniles. Further duties included presenting evidence for the purpose of adjudicating cases and implementing rehabilitative plans for families appearing in Juvenile Court as well as training new deputy county attorneys. She has spent many years serving on both the Lancaster County Juvenile Drug Treatment Court as well as the Lancaster County Family Drug Court. Sabata holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration from Doane College and a Juris Doctor from the University of Nebraska College of Law. She is a member of the Nebraska Bar Association, American Bar Association, National District Attorneys Association, and Nebraska County Attorneys Association. A lifelong Lincolnite, Sabata is also active in the community as an adjunct professor at Concordia University-Nebraska, a volunteer judge for mock trial and oral argument competitions at the University of Nebraska College of Law, and a long-time volunteer with local youth sports organizations. She is also passionate about serving on the Leadership Council of HopeLNK Suicide Prevention Coalition. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Linda S. Porter.



- On February 18, 2021, Governor Pete Ricketts appointed Lynelle Homolka of Central City as County Court Judge in the Fifth District. The district consists of Boone, Butler, Colfax, Hamilton, Merrick, Nance, Platte, Polk, Saunders, Seward, and York counties in Nebraska. Homolka, 46, has served as Merrick County Attorney and Central Nebraska Youth Services Administrator since 2011. In her role as county attorney, Homolka has handled juvenile, traffic, misdemeanor, and felony criminal prosecutions as well as a wide variety of civil matters such as proceedings related to mental health, child support, employment law, open meetings laws,

contracts/interlocal agreements, planning and zoning, ordinance enforcement, tax equalization, and inheritance tax review. Prior to her work as Merrick County Attorney, she served as Deputy County Attorney in Hall County from 2001 to 2010. Homolka has practiced criminal and juvenile law for over 20 years, litigating well over 100 criminal jury trials ranging from traffic infractions to felony cases involving violent assault, child abuse, sexual assault, and murder. Homolka holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Juris Doctor from Washburn University School of Law. She is a member of the Nebraska Bar Association. Homolka is active in the community as a mock trial judge for the Nebraska Bar Association and as a volunteer coach for volleyball and basketball youth clubs. Additionally, she's involved in numerous public boards and commissions, including the Governor's Commission for the Protection of Children, the Nebraska Attorney General's Human Trafficking Task Force, the Nebraska County Attorneys Association, and the Merrick County Youth Council. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Linda Caster Senff.



- On April 23, 2021, Governor Pete Ricketts appointed Tressa M. Alioth of Bennington as District Court Judge in the Fourth Judicial District in Douglas County, Nebraska. Alioth, 47, has worked as deputy county attorney in the Douglas County Attorney's Office since 1998. Her most recent responsibilities with the office have included serving as lead prosecutor in felony trials and supervising a team of six felony deputy county attorneys. She also has experience working as an attorney in the Domestic Violence Division and Civil Division of the Douglas County Attorney's Office. Alioth holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Creighton University and a Juris Doctor from the Creighton University School of Law. Since 2018, she has been an adjunct professor in the University of Nebraska Omaha's School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. She is a board member of the Nebraska County Attorneys Association. She's also a member of the Nebraska State Bar Association, the National District Attorneys Association, and the Nebraska State Council Interstate Compact for Adult Supervision. Alioth is on the leadership team of Love Church and serves on the board of directors of Room for Roots, a nonprofit offering mentorship programs.



- Judge Julie D. Smith of the 1st Judicial District has dedicated herself to enacting COVID safety measures with attorneys, law enforcement, and others to frequent her courtroom, while sharing the space with the County Court. She also shouldered the coordination of off-site jury selection and took it upon herself to familiarize staff with WebEx. With her instruction, those working with technology felt confident in using remote work software, and court proceeded seamlessly - as intended. *Many thanks to Judge Smith, for ensuring smooth transitions in uncertain circumstances!*



South Dakota:

- **No report.**