



March 2024
Midyear Report
Report of the District 10
Honorable Rachel L. Pickering

Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota

As noted in a prior report, we are keeping with the theme of NAWJ's mission of "promoting the judicial role of protecting the rights of individuals under the rule of law through strong, committed, diverse judicial leadership; fairness and equality in the courts; and equal access to justice," this district will work towards organizing and presenting the rewarding NAWJ programs. Overall, the goal is to successfully implement these programs throughout District 10.

On October 2023, there was a Zoom meeting, and Hon. Rachel Pickering was voted to be the District 10 representative. She stated that she hopes to begin working on holding regular scheduled meetings via Zoom and setting up a more-structured agenda. The next Zoom meeting will be scheduled for mid to late April.

Kansas:

There is strong interest in presenting the NAWJ flagship project, the *Color of Justice*. Coordinating this program with other law groups is a strong possibility. Again, we are looking into the best means of showcasing this program to many here in Kansas. Part of the efforts start with conducting outreach to high schools and moving forward to reach others throughout Kansas. Another NAWJ program, the *Informed Voter Project*, is also another priority for this district.



Our members are continuing to serve with honor and distinction. Notably, Judge Courtney Boehm has been selected for the 2024 Leadership Kansas class, which is a prestigious statewide leadership program.

Minnesota:

We are looking at furthering our efforts to recruit new members, which started last September, and hopefully will continue. Governor Walz has appointed several women to the judicial bench, including Viet-Hamn Winchell to the Tenth Judicial District, Allison Whalen to fill the Eighth Judicial District, Krista Marks to the First Judicial District, and Kristen Martilla to the Fourth Judicial District. In addition, as with the other states in this district, conducting outreach programs within the legal community through NAWJ's flagship programs will be a priority.

Nebraska:

A NAWJ project, MentorJet, can be facilitated through Nebraska's two law schools, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Creighton University. These two law school events can, with sufficient planning, get underway by early fall 2024. If properly executed, this could not only benefit many law students, but serve as a means towards increasing membership.

North Dakota:

North Dakota has several women judges serving throughout the state, including Justice Lisa Fair McEvers, of the North Dakota Supreme Court, a NAWJ member and as the presiding district court judge for the Northwest District, one of the eight judicial districts. Such inspiration for many future lawyers and judges! With that in mind, we can start discussing coordinating NAWJ programs such as MentorJet or From the Bar to the Bench program for the benefit the University of North Dakota law students. As the only law school in North Dakota, with about 240 students, we should take steps to provide these important programs to these future attorneys. Lastly, we will begin contact with the North Dakota tribal courts that are found within the nine North Dakota tribal reservations. This district will begin efforts to start future NAWJ presentations and/or spotlight those presiding as tribal judges.

South Dakota

Our district's efforts can certainly be replicated in South Dakota. This district will need to work on determining the best venue for facilitating our national NAWJ programs, including the possibility of holding this program at the University of South Dakota School of Law. And we will look into steps towards outreach within the legal community.

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Finally, we note the passing of retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on December 1, 2023. Her appointment as the first woman on the Supreme Court was an inspiration to many. In addition to her service on the Supreme Court bench from 1981 to 2006, she continued to serve our nation through her Civics program. Her memory was honored in many ways, including flag lowered to half-staff throughout our district's state capitals. Our members also paid tribute to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor through personal remembrances.

One such member, Justice Lisa Fair McEvers from North Dakota issued this moving statement:

"I am saddened to hear of the passing of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. She was a trailblazer who forged a path for women to follow in the law and the judiciary. Justice O'Connor's many years of distinguished service showed the world that women are competent to serve at the highest level, at a time when women were often excluded from roles in public service. Her grit and tenacity in attaining and in serving on the nation's highest court has been an inspiration to me and to countless other women and men. May her example never be forgotten."

We thank Justice O'Connor as a "daughter of the American Southwest," for blazing "an historic trail as our Nation's first female justice." Statement of Chief Justice John G. Roberts. As noted in his statement, "She met that challenge with undaunted determination, indisputable ability, and engaging candor."