



April 2026
Mid-Year Report
District 4

Honorable Francine L. Applewhite – District Director

District 4 Board Members:

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District 4 was well represented at the wonderful Annual Conference in Boston, MA. In attendance were judges from each of our jurisdictions, including three past NAWJ presidents, Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby, Judge Joan Churchill (Ret.), and Judge Toni Clarke (Ret.). At our breakfast meeting, a new MD Chapter Chair unanimously approved, Judge Syeetah Hampton-EL, Administrative Law Judge and Deputy Director of Operations with the Maryland Office of Administrative Hearings.

Judge Joan Churchill (Ret.) and others represented District 4 at IAWJ's hosted *In the Company of Justice*: A conversation with Nina Totenberg and Justice Ann Walsh Bradley (Chief Justice, Wisconsin Supreme Court (Ret.)). The December 4, 2025, event was held at the Army & Navy Club, in Washington, D.C.

In February, Judge Beverly Cutler (Ret.) asked, and District 4 responded to the tune of over \$2000.00 in monetary assistance for two of our Afghan women judges and their families. District 4 has become home to over a dozen Afghan women judges and their families. Beverly who is both a member of District 4, where she currently resides, and District 13 has been our Afghan women judges team leader.

On the International Day of Women Judges, the MD Chapter, inviting all our District of Columbia colleagues, hosted a virtual Happy Hour. Once again, I was reminded that NAWJ is a sisterhood. Of note, is that the VA Chapter hosted such an event for several years and during an executive committee meeting, the MD Chapter borrowed the idea.



On April 6, 2026, Governor and First Lady Moore welcomed the Maryland Women’s Caucus and the MD Chapter to Government House for the Irma S. Raker dinner. During a delicious meal we heard remarks from First Lady Dawn Moore, Governor Wes Moore, who specifically acknowledged the presence of NAWJ’s Past President, Judge Toni Clarke. Delegate Dana Jones, and Secretary Gloria Lawlah also gave remarks. On behalf of NAWJ, I thanked the Governor, First Lady, and all those in attendance for their continued commitment to the longstanding

relationship. The dinner ended with Justice Raker being surprised with a birthday cake and all singing “Happy Birthday.”



The VA Chapter, along with local attorneys, held their Color of Justice program at the Academy of Law & Public Safety. The Saturday, April 18, 2026, program was well organized and attended by a small but highly interested student body.



The VA Chapter once again held their Essay Scholarship. This year's Essay topic was "Homelessness and its impact on our criminal justice system." They received over 40 +

submissions. Three winners were selected and will be awarded their respective scholarships (1st place - \$1,000.00; 2nd place - \$750.00; 3rd place - \$500.00) on their Senior Awards Day.

The VA Chapter also hosted two regional happy hours - one in Northern Virginia and one in Tidewater. They also helped identify an attorney mentor for a newly arrived Afghan judge.

Lastly, Newport News, VA judges will be participating in a Law Day program, Lifting the Curtain on the Rule of Law and the American Dream. The May 1, 2026, program is hosted by the Clerk of Newport News Court in partnership with the Greater Peninsula Women's Bar Association.