



May 1, 2026  
Report from District 7  
Honorable Miriam A. Perry

Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia

### **Upcoming NAWJ Events**

#### **1. NAWJ Webinar: When Criminal Justice Meets the New ICE Mandates - House Courthouses Are Responding**

**Date:** May 6, 2026

**Time:** 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM ET

**Location:** Virtual

Presented by former and retired immigration judges, this program analyzes the critical 2026 "Dual System" where local criminal courtrooms and federal enforcement mandates intersect. Participants will learn about technical record-keeping required to prevent "ambiguity traps" and develop immediate strategic responses to landmark 2025–2026 shifts in mandatory detention, courthouse enforcement, and appellate review. Speakers will be Hon. Mimi Tsankov (Ret.), Hon Maria Lurye (Ret.), and Hon. Raisa Cohen (Ret.).

[Click here to Register](#)

#### **2. NAWJ 2026 Midyear Cruise**

**Date:** May 16, 2026 - May 24, 2026

**Location:** Start in Vancouver, BC; Alaska Cruise; End in Anchorage, AK

May 16, 2026 in Vancouver, BC there will be Check in and Fair Winds and Following Seas Opening Reception sponsored by JAMS from 5:30-7:00 PM. Guests must

be registered to attend the arrival reception. The NAWJ room block is sold out and you will need to reserve your own hotel in Vancouver. [Click here](#) for further details and additional hotels. May 17-24, 2026 will be the Alaska Cruise on Holland America with port stops and CLE sessions on at-sea days. Includes two onboard receptions for those registered. May 24, 2026 in Anchorage, AK will be the Land Ho! farewell reception for all registered guests hosted by Justice Dana Fabe and the Anchorage Association of Women Lawyers from 4:00-6:30 PM.

### **Registration & Cruise Reservation Process**

- NAWJ cabins are sold out. If you would still like to attend the Midyear Meeting Cruise follow these steps
- Step 1: Register yourself and your guests for the Midyear Meeting: [Click here for registration](#)
  - Log in as a NAWJ member after clicking the link above. You will be able to select your ticket and any guest tickets for the NAWJ Meeting.
  - Tickets:
    - \$250 for NAWJ Early Bird Registration
      - Includes all receptions (arrival reception, onboard welcoming reception, onboard closing reception, farewell reception), education sessions, registration materials, and Welcome Gift
    - \$150 for non-member guests
      - Includes all receptions and Welcome Gift
    - \$100 for guests under 21
      - Includes all receptions and Welcome Gift
- Step 2: Book the cruise Voyage Number 1633 directly with Holland America and use the code **TNQ** to be linked to the NAWJ group.

[Click here for Additional Hotel, Scheduling, & Logistical Details](#)

[Click here for Cabin Sample Pricing & Cruise Flyer](#)

### **Refund Policy**

- The cruise line has its own cancellation policy for the cruise portion of the event and you must contact the cruise line or Lorraine Travel to make those arrangements
- Full refunds will be offered for your NAWJ registration fee through January 31, 2026. If you must cancel on or after February 1, 2026, a \$25 processing fee will be

assessed. No refunds will be offered after April 1, 2026, because of material that will need to be ordered. Please email [jmihoc@nawj.org](mailto:jmihoc@nawj.org) to cancel.

### **3. NAWJ 2026 Annual Conference**

**Date:** October 15, 2026 - October 17, 2026

**Location:** New Orleans, Louisiana

The NAWJ Annual Conference brings together judges, attorneys, and legal professionals from across the country for three days of educational sessions, networking, and professional development. Attendees will engage in discussions on key issues facing the judiciary and participate in workshops focused on leadership, equity, and access to justice.

#### Schedule Overview

- **Thursday, October 15:** Seminars, Board Meeting, Networking Sessions, and Opening Reception
- **Friday, October 16:** Keynotes, Breakout Sessions, Breakfast, Lunch, and Reception
- **Saturday, October 17:** Annual Business Meeting, Breakout Sessions, Breakfast, and Gala

#### **Hotel Details**

- Hotel reservations can be made via this group reservation link:  
<https://book.passkey.com/gt/220995205?gtid=8d1d920f2e008d9cfb3c255a69c2ba88>
- Room rate is \$339/night. Room block rates run from October 13, 2026 - October 19, 2026 and will be available until September 22, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST.

### **4. NAWJ Regional Meeting - Minneapolis**

**Date:** June 5, 2026 - June 6, 2026

**Location:** Thomson Reuters, 2900 Ames Crossing Rd, Eagan, Minneapolis 55121

District 10 is hosting an inaugural regional conference on June 5 and 6, 2026. All members, especially those from Districts 7 (Michigan, Ohio, and West Virginia), 8 (Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky), 9 (Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin) will be able to gather at the Thomson Reuters conference center and campus located in Eagan, MN - not far from the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Conveniently, we have

discounted the group rate at the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel, located less than a mile away from our Thomson Reuters meeting site.

[Click here to Register](#)

### **Hotel Details**

- We have a room block at the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel (2611 Nordic Wy, Eagan, Minneapolis, 55121) at \$209/night.
- [Click here for Hotel Reservations](#)
- The room rate is \$209/night and room block rates run from June 1, 2026 - June 9, 2026 and will be available to book until May 5, 2026.

### **Cancellation Policy**

- The cancellation fee for persons who cancel on or before May 14, 2026 is \$25.
- Registrants who cancel after May 14, 2026 will not be eligible for a refund.
- Please contact [jmihoc@nawj.org](mailto:jmihoc@nawj.org) for any registration questions.

## **Opportunities to Support NAWJ Members**

### **1. 2026 Annual Spring Meeting of State Bar of Michigan Negligence Law Section**

**Date:** May 1, 2026 - May 4, 2026

**Location:** Scottsdale, Arizona - Phoenician Resort (6000 E Camelback Rd)

Come support Hon. Megan K Cavanagh, Hon. Julie Gafkay, & Hon. Tracy Elisabeth Van Den Bergh who will be speakers at this event!

[Click here for Registration](#)



Image credit: Michigan League of Conservation Voters, [saginawcountymi.org](http://saginawcountymi.org), [washbar.org](http://washbar.org)

### **2. State Bar of Michigan's 50-Year Golden Celebration (1976-2026)**

**Date:** May 7, 2026

**Time:** 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM ET

**Location:** Saint John's Resort, 44045 Five Mile Rd, Plymouth, MI

Come congratulate Hon. Pamela R. Harwood (Ret.) and celebrate her 50 years with the State Bar of Michigan!

[Click here to RSVP Attending](#)



Image credit: michbar.org

### 3. TEDxPontiac

**Date:** May 1, 2026

**Time:** 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM ET

**Location:** 800 North Glenwood Avenue, Pontiac, MI 48340

TEDxPontiac is a community-driven event licensed by TED, created to spotlight innovative ideas, untold stories, and local voices that inspire positive change. Come support Zenell B. Brown who will be in the lineup of speakers at this event.

[Click here to Purchase Tickets](#)



Image credit: TEDxPontiac

**Mentors Needed for the Face of Justice State Bar of Michigan!**



Image Credit: Face of Justice

Opportunity to join the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law in mentoring local high school students attending the UDM Pre-Law Day at 11 AM ET on Thursday, April 16, 2026. The program will be held in the atrium.

[Click here to Register](#)

Opportunity to volunteer for an upcoming event at Grand Ledge High School. The event begins at 10:00 AM ET on Wednesday, April 29, 2026. The event will be in the Hall of Justice in Lansing

[Click here to Register](#)

### **Welcome to our New Members!**

#### **Hon. Nicole Leighanne Castka**

Judge at the 3rd Judicial Circuit Court and from Detroit, MI.

#### **Hon. Susan A. Dabaja**

Judge at the Third Circuit Court and from Detroit, MI

#### **Hon. Annalisa S. Williams**

Judge at the Akron Municipal Court and from Akron, OH

#### **Ava Zehnder**

Law student at St. Mary's College and from Saint Joseph, MI

#### **Hon. Emily Briscoe Welter**

Judge at the Ohio Unemployment Compensation Review Commission and from Worthington, OH

#### **Hon. Viola King**

Judge at the State of Michigan and from Harrison Township, MI

**Congratulations To Our Outstanding 2026 NAWJ Members!**

Congratulations to Rabab Aljebury!

Rabab Aljebury received the Edward A. Khoury Scholarship on February 10th & has become the Law Student Liaison for the National Arab American Bar Association, Michigan Chapter on January 12th.



Image credit: National Arab American Bar Association

Congratulations to Hon. Chandra Baker-Robinson!

Hon. Chandra Baker-Robinson, a member of the Third Circuit Court of Michigan, invited 20 students from Detroit Cass Technical High School to come to the Third Circuit Court of Michigan on March 9th. Students gained hands-on exposure to the legal profession.



Image credit: Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan

Congratulations to Hon. Wende C. Cross!

Hon. Wende C. Cross was a keynote speaker for the 10th Annual Black History Month Banquet with the Zeta Mu Chapter at Miami University on February 19th.



Image credit: Wende C. Cross

Congratulations Amy M. Johnston!

Amy M. Johnston was named to the Legal 500 US Detroit Elite for Commercial Disputes list in January of 2026. This list recognizes outstanding practitioners in the U.S.



Image credit: Miller Canfield

Congratulations Hon. Michelle M. Rick!

Hon. Michelle M. Rick was recognized by the New York City Bar Association at the 6th International Law Conference on the States of Women as a 2026 Her Hero Lifetime Achievement Recipient.



Image credit: New York City Bar Association

Congratulations Hon. Miriam Perry!

Hon. Miriam Perry was a keynote speaker at the 2026 Women Law Students Association (WLSA) Leadership Banquet on February 20th. She was appointed as Chief Judge to the 15th Judicial District Court.



Image credit: WLSA Banquet

Congratulations Hon. Sara J. Smolenski!

Hon. Sara J. Smolenski is a finalist for the 2026 Warrior Award, where the winner will be announced at the Freedom Takes Flight Gala on April 24, 2026 at The Goei Center, 818 Butterworth St SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504. The Warrior Award recognizes fighters who work relentlessly to support victims of human trafficking and combating sexual exploitation.



Image credit: Jonathan D. Lopez

### **Past NAWJ Events**

#### **1. NAWJ Women's History Gathering - Informal Virtual Gathering**

A virtual women's history gathering occurred on March 31st at 5:30 PM to celebrate and share about women individuals admired and that served as their role models.

#### **2. NAWJ Planning Meeting**

A planning meeting occurred on December 6th at 6:00 PM. The topics of discussion were updates from Immed. Past President Rick, updates from the District 7 co-chairs (Judge Perry and Judge Murnane), updates from Michigan co-chair Zenell Brown, collaboration with WLAM on April 24-25, 2026 in Detroit, and 2026 ideas and impacts, specifically SE MentorJet for Spring Lily Watch Party/Discussion Gathering opportunities like teas, lunch, and outings.

#### **3. NAWJ Giftcard Wishlist to Support Afghan Judges During the Holidays**

An initiative to help support former judges and lawyers from Afghan families that are living in Michigan and Ohio during this holiday season, through gift card donations.

#### **4. Brunch with Hon. Julie Gafkay**

An exclusive brunch at the home of Judge Julie Gafkay took place on March 21st at 10 AM for purposes of networking and connecting with other members of NAWJ.

#### **5. NAWJ Mentors at Michigan State University**

NAWJ volunteers were able to mentor for the Face of Justice Program at Michigan State University on January 23rd. The program is hosted by the State Bar of Michigan Face of Justice which is a pathway to the legal profession effort aimed at students, to give them an opportunity to meet with legal professionals in face-to-face “jet-mentoring” sessions.

#### **6. WLAM & NAWJ Podcast**

Host Shawndrica Simmons talked with Judge Michelle Rick of the Court of Appeals for a timely and candid conversation on vision and purpose in turbulent times. Judge Rick reflects on her extensive career across every level of Michigan’s legal system and discusses the growing challenges facing the judiciary, including public distrust, political pressure, and threats to judicial independence.

**[Click here to listen to the Episode](#)**