

A Modern Take on the Media and the Courts

This session covers the ever-important role of the media in its coverage of the courts. Unquestionably, media acts as the bridge between the courts and the public by reporting on cases, explaining procedures and court decisions. Essentially, the media helps educate the public about how the law works. Recognizing the affirmative dual role that media coverage of the courts plays; by informing the public and promoting transparency, this session considers the impact that media coverage has on the courts and public perception of the courts. The session will also discuss courts' proactive media strategies, particularly in high-profile cases. This discussion also includes strategies aimed at balancing media's informational role with the court's duty to preserve order, protect participants, and deliver justice based on evidence rather than headlines.

In this session, you will hear about:

1. Overview of how media coverage of the courts has changed.
2. The important role that media has in its coverage of the courts, including its impact on public perception of the courts.
3. Recent trends and technological developments in the manner in which media is covering high-profile cases.
4. Court's proactive media strategies to respond to press inquiries, correct inaccuracies and create educational resources for journalists and the public.

Panelists:



Hon. Peter Cahill

Pete Cahill, now retired, served as a district court judge for the Fourth Judicial District in Minneapolis, Minnesota from 2007 to the end of 2024. He served in the criminal division, the juvenile division and in the drug treatment court during his tenure on the bench. He was also the assistant chief judge of the district for two years and served as chief judge of the district for four years.

In October 2022, he delivered the 141st Justice Jackson Lecture at the National Judicial College, covering lessons learned from presiding over a high-profile criminal trial, *State v. Chauvin*,

involving the death of George Floyd. He currently is part of a team teaching evidence at the National Judicial College General Jurisdiction course.

He is a 1984 *magna cum laude* and Order of the Coif graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School.



Prof. David Schultz

David Schultz is a Distinguished University Professor of Political Science and Legal Studies at Hamline University and a Professor of Law at the University of St. Thomas School of Law and the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania. A four-time Fulbright scholar, he has taught extensively in Europe and Asia. His scholarship focuses on constitutional law, election law, and judicial behavior, reflected in

more than 45 books and 200+ articles, including *Constitutional Law in Contemporary America* (3rd ed., 2026) and *Handbook of Election Law* (2022).

He is a licensed attorney in Minnesota and before the U.S. Supreme Court, and previously served as executive director of Common Cause Minnesota and in leadership roles with the American Civil Liberties Union. A former editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, he is widely cited in major media outlets. He currently serves as editor-in-chief of the *Minneapolis Times*.



Hon. Heather Welch

Hon. Heather A. Welch (Ret.) joins JAMS after a distinguished 23-year career on the Marion Superior Court (Indianapolis), including service as an Indiana commercial court judge for almost eight years and the presiding judge of the Marion Superior Court during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While Judge Welch presided over commercial and business disputes, she also managed a civil docket comprising over 2,000 cases, including complex product liability, medical and legal malpractice, construction and personal injury matters. She is known for her hands-on approach and efficiency in managing cases while considering the proportionality issues of each case to develop a timely but cost-conscious solution when appropriate.

While on the bench, Judge Welch held many leadership roles, including presiding judge of the Marion Superior Court, chair of the ABA Judicial Division, president of the Indiana Judges Association, elected member of the American Law Institute, chair elect of the National Association of Women Judges and legal writing adjunct professor at Indiana University McKinney School of Law. Judge

Welch has a reputation for fairness, thoroughness and being a problem solver, was well as having the ability to quickly navigate complex business and negligence cases.

Tom Hauser (Moderator)