

Shared Leadership Skills in the Courts and in Sports

Join us for an insightful roundtable with Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Natalie Hudson, Chief Judge Sarah Warner of Kansas Court of Appeals, and Minnesota Vikings Chief Legal Officer Karin Nelsen, as moderated by Laurel Klein Searles, of Kansas Office of Judicial Administration. They will explore the essential leadership skills that they share in common as a chief justice, chief appellate judge, and as chief counsel for the Minnesota Vikings. The skills include strategic judgment and decision-making, with a particular focus on the importance of accountability, a growth mindset, and a keen awareness of their leadership role in the community. In this program, you will hear the following discussion points:

- Discuss how to lead in a high-pressure, public environment
- Ways to develop clear and consistent communication within your organization
- Discuss the importance of leaders building strong collaborative working environments

Panelists:



Hon. Natalie Hudson

Natalie E. Hudson was appointed Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court by Governor Tim Walz in October 2023; and re-elected as Chief Justice in November 2024. She first joined the Supreme Court in 2015, appointed by Governor Mark Dayton, and was re-elected in 2016, and 2022. Hudson previously served on the Minnesota Court of Appeals for 13 years, appointed by Governor Jesse Ventura in 2002. Before becoming a judge, she worked in legal services, private practice and academia, including roles at Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, the law firm of Robins, Kaplan, Miller and Ciresi, and Hamline University

School of Law. She also served as St. Paul City Attorney and later worked for the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General. Hudson earned her undergraduate degree from Arizona State University, and her law degree from the University of Minnesota.

Minnesota law requires judges to retire at 70, and she has announced her retirement effective September 30, 2026.

Karin Nelsen



Hon. Sarah Warner

Judge Sarah Warner was appointed to the Kansas Court of Appeals in May 2019 and became Chief Judge in January 2025. She began her law career as the chambers counsel to Chief Justice Robert Davis of the Kansas Supreme Court, then practiced civil, constitutional, and appellate litigation with a Lawrence law firm. She has taught as an adjunct professor at Washburn University School of Law since 2009 and was president of the Kansas Bar Association from 2018-19. Judge

Warner is a sixth generation Kansan who grew up in Pittsburg. She and her husband Brandon now live in Lenexa.



Laurel Klein Searles (Moderator)

Laurel Klein Searles is Chief of Attorney Services and Compliance for the Office of Judicial Administration for the Kansas Supreme Court. Laurel earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from Kansas State University in 2004. She then earned her law degree from Washburn University School of Law where she served as research and notes editor for the Washburn Law Journal before graduating with Dean's Honors in 2008.

After leaving law school, Laurel served as a staff attorney for the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, a statewide non-profit serving all 105 counties in Kansas. She then transitioned into government service and began working for the Kansas Department of Labor where she began as an Appeals Referee in 2012 and was subsequently promoted to Chief of Appeals in 2015. While in the Office of Appeals, Laurel presided over a high-volume case load of unemployment insurance appeals hearings. When promoted, Laurel oversaw the operations of the division while maintaining a reduced caseload. Laurel briefly left the Kansas Department of Labor in 2018 to work as an attorney for the Social Security Administration before returning in 2019 to serve as Director of Unemployment Insurance. As Director, Laurel oversaw all unemployment operations for the state of Kansas.

In 2021, Laurel joined the Office of Judicial Administration. In her current position, Laurel oversees attorney admissions, attorney registration, continuing legal education, compliance and grants for the Office of Judicial Administration. Laurel has the pleasure of staffing the Kansas Supreme Court's Rural Justice Initiative Committee and the Learning Center Committee. She currently serves on the National Conference of Bar Examiner's Multi-State Professional Responsibility Exam Committee and previously served on their Education Committee. Additionally, Laurel is a Commissioner on the Kansas Human Rights Commission, which is a role she took on after being appointed by Governor Laura Kelly and confirmed by the Kansas Senate in 2020. Laurel previously served as an ad hoc member of the Judicial Council Juvenile Offender/Child in Need of Care Law Advisory Committee. She is an active member of the Kansas Bar Association, Kansas Women Attorney Association, and Women Attorney Association of Topeka.