



# ***The Gavel***

## ***Newsletter***

**Edition 2026-03**

### **BREAKING NEWS!**

Please update your records! The National Judges Association has a NEW address! Please ensure your paying authority has the correct address for any future payments for dues or conferences.

National Judges Association  
PO Box 805  
Sidney, MT 59270

### **FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!**

I am so sorry in the delay in getting out the third edition of the newsletter to you all! It has been a hectic time of getting a wonderful conference put together that I'm sure you will all enjoy! Trust me, this is a conference you do not want to miss!

Our Executive Board has been diligently working behind the scenes getting ready for our annual membership meeting and the final details for conference. Our State and Alternate Representatives should be reaching out to each and every one of you to encourage your participation in the conference and to gather news from you to post in our newsletter. Don't forget you can always reach out to me with any news to share – re-election, retirement, special anniversaries, etc. Our organization is here to support each other and we want to hear from you!

Please note that if you have not yet paid your dues, they were due by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Notices have been sent out if yours have not yet been received – please be sure to send in right away so you can continue to support and benefit from our organization. This is an organization for you – we are here for each other. If you need letters to the editor, press releases, speakers at conferences, etc., reach out! We would love to assist in any way we can!

Off to finish working on conference details now. I miss seeing all of your smiling faces and hope to see you soon in Montana!

## CONFERENCE INFORMATION!

The NJA 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference is scheduled for September 14-28 in Missoula, Montana!

The registration forms have been emailed and/or mailed to all current members and are also available on our website. Pay by check or online with a credit/debit card.

It's not too late to register! To ensure you avoid a late fee and missing out on the state rates for rooms, be sure to register and book your room by August 14<sup>th</sup>! We look forward to having all of you in Montana for a week of learning, exploring the area, and the best fellowship that is out there! Clear your schedules and Meet Me In Montana!

## TENTATIVE AGENDA!

Please note that this is a tentative agenda and subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.



**45<sup>th</sup> Annual National Judges Association Conference**

**September 14-18, 2026**

**Holiday Inn Missoula Downtown**

**Missoula, MT 59802**

### TENTATIVE AGENDA

#### **Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

10 am – 3 pm Council of State Representatives Meeting

3 pm – 5 pm Registration

#### **Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup>**

Time TBD Breakfast

8:30 – 8:45 am Welcome and announcements

|                     |                                             |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 8:45 am – 9:45 am   | Welcome from Missoula County District Court |
| 9:45 am – 10:00 am  | Break                                       |
| 10:00 am – 12:00 pm | Traffic Law                                 |
| 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  | President’s Luncheon                        |
| 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm   | Racism & Bias                               |
| 3:00 pm – 3:15 pm   | Break                                       |
| 3:15 pm – 5:00 pm   | Community Justice                           |

Dinner on your own

**Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>**

|          |                                               |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Time TBD | Breakfast                                     |
| 8:00 am  | Line up to board transport to Philipsburg     |
| 9:00 am  | Arrive at Philipsburg and explore on your own |

Gem Mountain Storefront, Montana Gems of Philipsburg, The Sweet Place, Philipsburg Brewing Company, Miss Bee’s Café, Montana Law Enforcement Museum Philipsburg Creamery, Bickerstaff Book Sellers, Souvenir Shopping

|          |                                                             |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11:00 am | Board transport to Missoula                                 |
| 12:00 pm | Lunch in Missoula TBD                                       |
| 1:30 pm  | Board transport to Montana Natural History Museum           |
| 3:00 pm  | Board transport to Missoula Butterfly House and Insectarium |
| 4:30 pm  | Board transport to hotel                                    |
| 5:00 pm  | Back at hotel                                               |

Dinner on your own

**Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**

|                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Time TBD            | Breakfast                    |
| 8:30 am – 10:30 am  | Topic Name TBD (Bill Sutton) |
| 10:30 am – 10:45 am | Break                        |
| 10:45 am – 12:15pm  | Human Trafficking            |



|                    |                                                       |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm | Lunch                                                 |
| 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm  | Foundation Meeting (All Association Members)          |
| 2:30 pm – 2:45 pm  | Break                                                 |
| 2:45 pm – 5:00 pm  | Business Meeting (All Association Members)            |
| 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm  | Foundation Auction/Dinner – BRING YOUR AUCTION ITEM!! |

### **Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>**

|                     |                                                   |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Time TBD            | Breakfast                                         |
| 8:30 am – 10:30 am  | Partner Family Member Assault (Domestic Violence) |
| 10:30 am – 10:45 am | Break                                             |
| 10:45 am – 12:00 pm | Ethics – with a twist                             |
| 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  | Lunch                                             |
| 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm   | Court/Judicial Security                           |
| 3:00 pm – 3:15 pm   | Break                                             |
| 3:15 pm – 4:15 pm   | Judicial Wellness                                 |
| 4:15 pm – 5:00 pm   | Open roundtable discussion/wrap up                |
| 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm  | Banquet                                           |



## ABOUT MISSOULA!

Missoula is a vibrant western Montana city known as "The Garden City," featuring key highlights like the University of Montana, the Clark Fork River, and surrounding wilderness areas. It is the second-most populous city in the state with an estimated population of nearly 79,000 residents.

Missoula is nestled in the Northern Rockies at the convergence of five valleys and three rivers (Clark Fork, Bitterroot, and Blackfoot). It is surrounded by seven wilderness areas, offering prime fly-fishing, hiking on Mount Sentinel, and floating or kayaking right through downtown. Missoula features over 400 acres of city parks to enjoy – including the famous Caras Park which is the home to the historic Carousel for Missoula – a 30-year old carousel with handcrafted ponies. The Riverfront Walking Trail is right there taking you on a scenic walk of the Clark Fork River which borders the Holiday Inn Missoula Downtown where the conference will be held. Continue to walk along the river and watch the surfers ride Brennan's wave – the only place in Montana where surfers can actually surf a continuous wave.

The University of Montana and the Alexander Blewett III School of Law is within a short walking distance from the hotel sitting just directly across the river. Local restaurants, bars, and lounges are just a few steps away. Decadent meals featuring local beef, a quick bite of pizza, or snacks and drinks at a rooftop lounge are just a few of the perks of staying at the Holiday Inn Downtown Missoula.





## STATE AND ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVES!

The states that are up for election for State and Alternate Representatives this year at the conference include:

Kansas  
Mississippi  
Montana  
Nevada  
New York  
Oklahoma  
South Carolina  
Wyoming

If you are a member of one of these states and are interested in becoming a State or Alternate Representative, let us know! The duties of our Reps are designated in the Council of State Representatives Policies. This includes the following:

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES** will include but not be limited to:

- A. To assure the election of a representative and an alternate representative from the state and report same to the Executive Director/Treasurer.
- B. Attend all meetings of the Council of State Representatives and of the Association membership.
- C. Act as liaison between the Association and their state members, sharing information with all members within their state.
- D. Be responsible for recruiting new members and maintaining current members.
- E. Keep "The Gavel Newsletter" Editor informed of news from the state and or write articles of interest to other members for publication therein.
- F. Monitor state (or government entity) caucus.
- G. Provide news of NJA for in-state publications such as state association publications or local news media.
- H. Attend (and encourage the alternate representative to attend) General Membership meetings. Be visible to both the Association and state members.

- I. Advise the Education Committee of all state members who are eligible for any Judicial Education Achievement Awards not less than sixty (60) days prior to the Annual Meeting.
- J. Coordinate with the Membership Committee on any regional educational seminars or programs.
- K. Repealed May 20, 2006.
- L. Upon receipt of the notification list of delinquent members from the Executive Director/Treasurer, contact those members and encourage their continued participation in the Association. Provide information of status of members to the Executive Director/Treasurer.
- M. Notify the Executive Director/Treasurer of dates of state conferences and educational programs. Information should be forwarded as soon as possible.
- N. ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES shall include these same responsibilities in partnership with the state representative or in sole performance should the state representative be unable to act.

Please consider being a part of supporting the National Judges Association.



## EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS!

**PRESIDENT:** Hon. Lamont Barnett (VT)

**PRESIDENT ELECT:** Hon. Derrick Dash (SC)

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Hon. Ellie Brown (AZ)

**SECRETARY:** Hon. Penny McPherson (MT)

**SR. DIRECTOR:** Hon. Carlton Gray (NM)

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/TREASURER:** Hon. Kerry O'Connor (MT)

## STATE REPRESENTATIVES AND ALTERNATES!

**ARIZONA** – Hon. Darendra Day and Hon. Bill Sutton

**MONTANA** – Hon. Penny McPherson and Hon. Melissa Gallagher

**NEW MEXICO** – Hon. Collis Johnson and Hon. Cynthia Wagoner

**OREGON** – Hon. Candace Hissong

**SOUTH CAROLINA** – Hon. Derrick Dash

**VERMONT** – Hon. Lamont Barnett and Hon. Carolyn Partridge

## CONTACT INFORMATION!

Hon. Kerry O'Connor

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