



# ***The Gavel***

## **Newsletter**

**Edition 2025-04**

We are approaching the time of year when the days just speed by with all of the upcoming holidays. Remember to take time to be thankful and to enjoy precious time spent with family and loved ones. Lives can change in a blink of an eye, with the littles growing up, children leaving the home for their own adventures, and adults continuing to age. Enjoy that adventure you have been planning, take a different friend for lunch each week, buy that car you have wanted. Sometimes just the littlest of things brings the greatest joys to those around us. Many happy holidays to you!



## **2026 NJA ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE!**

We are currently in the planning stages for the NJA 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference! **SAVE THE DATE!** We are tentatively scheduled for September 13 – 17, 2026, in Missoula, Montana! With easy access to drive or to fly, you will want to attend this conference! If you have ideas for future classes you would like to see at conferences, please send me an email! These conferences are for **YOU** and we need your input to make them successful and meaningful to each and every one of us! Additionally, we are looking for states wishing to host 2027 or 2028! We have a team that was created specifically for the education conferences and will assist you with all of the planning! There are several states we have not been to for a while, and we would really like to return! Keep this in mind and let me know if you are interested in hosting the next adventure!

*“The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty seeks to understand the minds of other men and women; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded.”*

**- Learned Hand – The Spirit of Liberty**

**NATIONAL JUDGES ASSOCIATION**  
**KENNETH L. MACEACHERN AWARD**  
Nomination Form and Confidential Report

I nominate \_\_\_\_\_ for the Kenneth L. MacEachern Award for Outstanding Achievement by a non-attorney Judge. In my opinion, he/she possesses the qualities below and seems to me in all respects to qualify for consideration under the eligibility rules furnished me.

1. Nominee's Birth Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Court Title and Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Judicial Service: \_\_\_\_\_

2. How Selected as a Judge: \_\_\_\_\_ Appointed \_\_\_\_\_ Elected

3. My opportunities to evaluate the nominee are:

4. How long have you known the nominee and what is your relationship to him/her?

5. From my personal knowledge, I believe the nominee possesses the following qualities which makes him/her deserving of the MacEachern Award:

6. The contributions of the nominee on a local, state, and/or national level to continuing education of the Judiciary are:

7. What other ways has the nominee improved the quality of justice on a local, state or national level? Include any awards, monimations, offices held, etc.)
8. The names and addresses of at least two other persons who are acquainted with the character and professional record of this nominee who are not related to or associated in business with the nominee. Attach their letters of endorsement or recommendations.

Any additional endorsements, recommendations or letters of support should be attached to this nomination form. If you need more space for further information, please attach additional pages.

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Nominator's Signature

Please print name, address and telephone number of nominator.

**Please return this form before March 1<sup>st</sup> to:**

**National Judges Association  
Hon. Kerry Burman, Executive Director  
315 S Pearson Ave  
Glendive, MT 59330**

**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

The nominee need not be a member of the National Judges Association in order to be nominated.

The MacEachern Award Committee will consider this nomination to be the personal choice of the nominator and not a nomination by any organization with which the nominator may be associated. Information furnished herein will be treated as confidential. The Committee will not make public the identity of any nominator or the nominee, except the winner of the Award.

## KENNETH L. MACEACHERN AWARD!

This Award is the highest tribute given to a lay judge in the United States. It is named for Kenneth L. MacEachern, the founder, organizer and first Executive Director of the National Judges Association. Annually, the award committee, which consists of all previous recipients of this Award, select a judge who has been nominated by his/her peers as a jurist who has made an outstanding contribution to judicial education and the enhancement of the quality of justice. While this award has not been presented for the past few years, please take a few minutes to think of the judges you have met in your duties. Does one stand out? Do you believe they should be honored with such an award? To nominate a fellow non-attorney judge, please use the nomination form in this newsletter! In order to qualify, please make sure all deadlines are adhered to!

## COSR AND EXECUTIVE BOARD MID-YEAR MEETING!

If you are a State or Alternate Representative, a member of the Executive Board, or a Committee Chairperson, our Mid-Term Meeting will be scheduled for some time in February/March 2026. This is a virtual meeting and it is imperative that all members attend. As soon as the date is set, an email to all members required to be at the meeting will be sent with the link to join virtually. IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ATTEND! We have a lot of business to discuss including one other amendment to our current By-Laws that was brought up at our meeting in Albuquerque.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER!

As we turn the page on the fantastic 2025 NJA Conference in Albuquerque New Mexico, I would just like to say what a great job that past President and conference chair the Hon. Carlton Gray and his staff from Aztec Municipal Court did. Along with Executive Director the Hon. Kerry Burman they put together a series of educational classes including talks on Judicial Wellness, Traffic, Landlord/Tenant, Code Violations, Self-Represented Litigants and much more. The event included great food and a tram ride to the top of the 10,000 ft. Sandia Mountain, with fantastic views of Albuquerque and the surrounding area. One of the biggest questions we faced was Red or Green, of course I am talking about what type of chili sauce to put on your food. And according to Judge Gray, the right answer is .... Christmas, meaning both. We have now started planning next years Conference and should have more information about it soon, so stay tuned.

NJA President  
Hon. Lamont Barnett  
Windham County Court  
Newfane Vermont

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!

I am truly blessed to be part of this organization that continually aspires to ensure all judges of courts of limited jurisdiction, whether attorneys or not, have the opportunity for not just great training, but the occasion to meet others from across the country that deal with the same successes and struggles. Life-long friends have been made, and no matter where we go in our futures, they will remain in my heart.

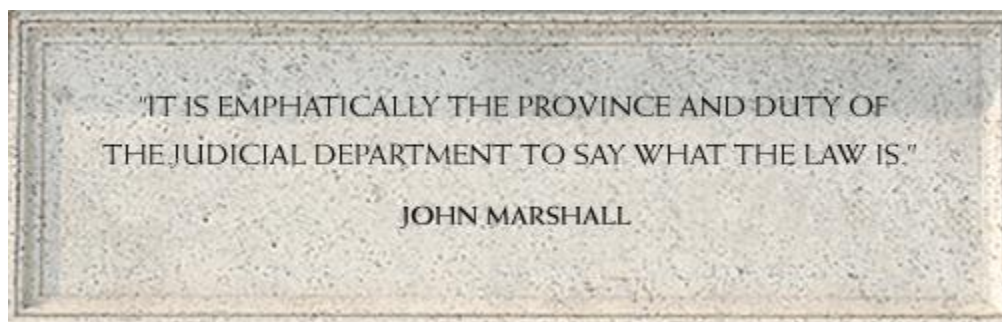
After a few years of both personal and professional turmoil, and some deep soul searching, I have decided to retire after spending 20 years on the bench. While my judicial role may be over, I am dedicated to the National Judges Association and will remain as your Executive Director/Treasurer and continue to be a part of this wonderful organization. I have started a new position where I can continue to serve, and am pleased to have been asked to join Montana's Re-Entry Program with the Department of Labor. In this position, I will work with those being released from prison and need to obtain the skills necessary to obtain meaningful employment as well as assisting them in finding stable housing, medical care and treatment. I will also be working with those who are still involved in the justice system – some of the people that you see every day. I am excited to start this journey continuing to use the skills and resources I have used as a judge.

I am looking forward to the finalization of our 2026 Annual Conference and hope to see you all there! Let's make this one the largest and best one yet! Enjoy the rest of 2025. This year has flown by!



Retired Judge Kerry Burman (MT) receiving a plaque from the Montana Supreme Court by Hon. Kelly Mantooh, Fergus County Justice of the Peace/Chair of Commission on Courts of Limited Jurisdiction.

Hon. Jessie Connolly, Sweet Grass County Justice of the Peace/President of the Montana Magistrates Association, presented cards, gifts, and hugs at the Fall Conference of the Montana Courts of Limited Jurisdiction.



## 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 Burman (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 Burman

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