



Annual Report of
the President-Elect
Judge Karen Donohue

2020 has been a unique and challenging year. Many thanks to Judge Bernadette D'Souza who led us through this unprecedented period with such determination and grace.

Because of the pandemic, much of the work the President-Elect would normally do was somewhat sidelined. However, with the assistance of our Interim Executive Director and others, we were able to do quite a bit of pivoting, rebuilding and planning.

Strategic Plan: Judge D'Souza tasked me early with helping to implement the Strategic Plan. Much has been accomplished with regard to achieving our goals in some areas, but there is still much to be accomplished in the coming years.

With regard to Pillar I, we have made great strides with regard to our objective of creating more accessible education thanks to Judges Lisa Walsh, Elizabeth White and Liz Lee and their incredible work on webinars and podcasts. Judge Mimi Tsankov has developed a five-part podcast on Immigration Courts, which will be released after the virtual conference. Judges Wendy Coats, Vivian Medinilla and Brandy Mueller are in the planning stages for the next series on the impact of COVID-19 on Criminal Courts. Judge Lee has the commitment of Judge Kristin Rosi and Piper Kerman to do a series on Women in Prison. Interim ED Laurie Denham has been working with a grant expert to explore increased grant funding. We have plans to continue building on this great start and are looking at ways to increase our revenue through some of these programs.

A lot of work has been done with regard to Pillar II, accomplishing organizational excellence. This is particularly true with regard to achieving staffing structure for optimal effectiveness and excellence in operational efficiency. Laurie has truly organized the office, streamlined processes and policies and has recently "hired" two interns who are assisting with marketing ideas, communication and avenues to increase our membership.

With regard to financial sustainability, we have, of course, begun the process of a capital campaign to help raise revenue to offset the losses from not holding an in-person conference. Laurie and I have met, telephonically, with all of the Resource Board members and the co-chairs of the Resource Board. (See more on this below). Laurie successfully secured commitments from all to meet our revenue goal from the Resource Board. Financial sustainability will be a priority in the coming year. A proposed budget will be presented to the incoming board, which includes a number of cost-cutting efforts.

Education: The bylaws indicate that the President-Elect is to monitor and supervise all judicial education projects of the organization. As such, Judge D'Souza appointed me as co-chair of the Judicial Education

& Academic Network Committee. As a result of a recent request for member ideas for educational topics, Laurie and I received a detailed proposal for the production of a video/webinar series entitled The Virtual Courtroom: Forensic Techniques to Assess Credibility and Effective Judicial Office Communication via Video Conference from Judge Kalemkiarian (San Diego). Laurie is seeking opportunities for us to fund this project, which will concentrate on the challenges created by virtual proceedings. We also have a number of suggestions from members of the committee, which will be forwarded to the Detroit Conference Planning Committee or be the subject of webinars.

Resource Board: The bylaws also indicate that the President-Elect is to serve as the liaison to the Resource Board. Due to the resignation of long time Resource Board co-chair, Karen Johnson-McKewan, this was really a rebuilding year. Beginning with Priya Purandare, I met with the new co-chairs, Nicole Erb and Sarah London, at the Mid-Year Meeting to discuss value propositions for the board members and continued this work with Laurie Denham throughout the year. While law firms have been very hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the vast majority of our Resource Board members remain interested in supporting NAWJ and look forward to participating in webinars, conferences and other NAWJ events. Some will be able to commit additional funds in the future, others look forward to helping us with projects and the creation of resources that will assist our membership (e.g. a desk book). Laurie is also planning on reaching out to corporations with similar civic responsibilities to NAWJ's mission as alternative sources of sponsorship.

Annual Conference Planning: Each year the President-Elect works with the annual conference planning committee to develop and plan the next annual conference. Due to the pandemic, I very regrettably was unable to work as fully as I would have liked with Judge Michelle Rick and her committee. However, we were able to secure a wonderful venue for the 2022 conference. The Book Cadillac Hotel in downtown Detroit is a charming historic venue. Judge Rick has several events planned (a visit to Motown!) and has already reached out to the Canadian Association of Women Judges to participate in our conference, as Windsor, Ontario is directly across the river from Detroit.

I look forward to working with Judge Barbara Holmes for any last minute "tweaks" that become necessary. However, I know that she and her committee have done a stellar job of planning and that the committee is fully prepared to launch. I am excited to attend the 2021 Annual Conference in Nashville.

Mid-Year Meeting: At this point, it is unclear as to whether or not we will be able to hold an in-person mid-year meeting this spring. Laurie and I have been discussing options but given the on-going uncertainty caused by the pandemic, a virtual meeting or very small leadership conference is more likely. More information will be presented soon.