



# Improving Rural Access to Justice with Judicial Leadership

Judge Michelle Rick, Margaret Pettipas, and Dennis Kennedy

“Low-income rural residents receive inadequate or no professional legal help for an estimated 86% of their problems.”

- *Legal Services Corporation, “Rural Communities Need Legal Aid Fact Sheet*

“Twenty percent of the nation’s population reside in rural communities, yet **only two percent of lawyers** serve these communities.”

- *Legal Services Corporation, “Rural Communities Need Legal Aid Fact Sheet*



# Agenda

The Rural Justice Gap – Judge Michelle Rick

What the Research Shows – Margaret Pettipas

NAWJ Education Project as a First Step – Dennis Kennedy

Your Feedback and Questions – All

How Can You Help?

# Judge Rick's Story

# Judge Rick's Perspective

Simply put, the justice gap is the difference between the legal needs of low-income and moderate-income people (and small businesses) and the resources available to meet those needs.

Nearly 10 million rural residents are eligible for  
Legal Services Corporation services (2017 LSC  
Justice Gap Report)





75% of rural households experienced a civil legal problem in prior year

23% of them experienced more than SIX civil legal problems

**REMEMBER:** Low-income rural residents receive inadequate or no professional legal help for an estimated 86% of their problems



In the US, 40% of all counties have fewer than 1 lawyer per 1,000 residents

In ten states with large rural populations, there are counties with no lawyers

**REMEMBER:** 20% of US population lives in rural communities, yet only 2% of lawyers serve those communities



One-third of rural counties had poverty rates above *20%*

For single mothers with children, the rural poverty rate is *44%*

**REMEMBER:** All of these statistics are from before COVID



# Rural Justice Collaborative: Mission on Vimeo

PRODUCTION \_\_\_\_\_

DIRECTOR \_\_\_\_\_

CAMERA \_\_\_\_\_

SCENE \_\_\_\_\_

TAKE \_\_\_\_\_

## *From the Bench*

*Some personal  
observations  
about the  
significant  
problems and  
issues raised in  
rural access to  
justice*





*What The Research Tells Us and  
Steps Forward*

# Margaret's Story

# Margaret's Perspective





# Margaret's Research



# More Data on the Rural Justice Gap



# Scope of the Problem

The image features a dense field of 3D question marks in a dark, monochromatic blue-grey color. The question marks are scattered throughout the frame, creating a sense of depth and complexity. In the lower center, a bright, glowing light source, possibly representing a solution or a path forward, casts a warm, golden light that creates a strong lens flare and illuminates the surrounding question marks, drawing the viewer's eye towards the center of the composition.

# Root Causes of Rural Access to Justice Issues





# The Effects We Are Seeing (and Not Seeing)

# Potential Solutions



A low-angle, close-up shot of a person's legs and feet as they run on a track. The runner is wearing dark-colored athletic shoes with a prominent, light-colored, grid-like tread pattern on the soles. The background is heavily blurred with horizontal streaks, conveying a sense of high speed and motion. A bright, warm light source, likely the sun, is positioned in the upper left, creating a lens flare effect across the top of the frame. The overall color palette is dominated by warm tones of orange, yellow, and red, contrasted with the cool blues and greys of the blurred background.

**Moving Forward**



# Case Studies





*NAWJ Education Project as a First  
Step*

# Dennis's Story



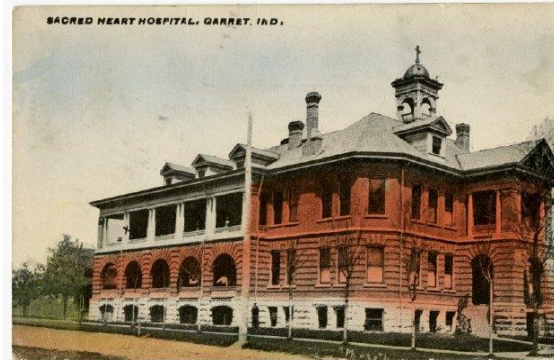
# Dennis's Perspective



©2009 Hoosier Recollections  
Randolph Street looking south, Garrett, Indiana  
17" x 11" original digital print on 19" x 13" rag paper



# Dennis's Perspective



# Dennis's Perspective



Pioneering law's future with technology and innovation

# The NAWJ Education Project





Goals

# Approach





# The Current Version (Draft)





## Outline of Modules

Module 1. Introduction to Rural Justice Issues

Module 2. Understanding the Civil Justice Gap

Module 3. Importance of Courts in Rural Areas

Module 4. Technological Solutions and Innovations

Module 5. Judicial Education and its Role

Module 6. Case Studies: Successes and Failures.

Module 7. The Role of Policy and Structural Changes

Module 8. Incentives for Legal Professionals to Assist Courts  
and Judges

Module 9. Human Concerns and Issues

Module 10. Online Resources and Support Systems

Module 11. Conclusion: The Way Forward for Rural Justice

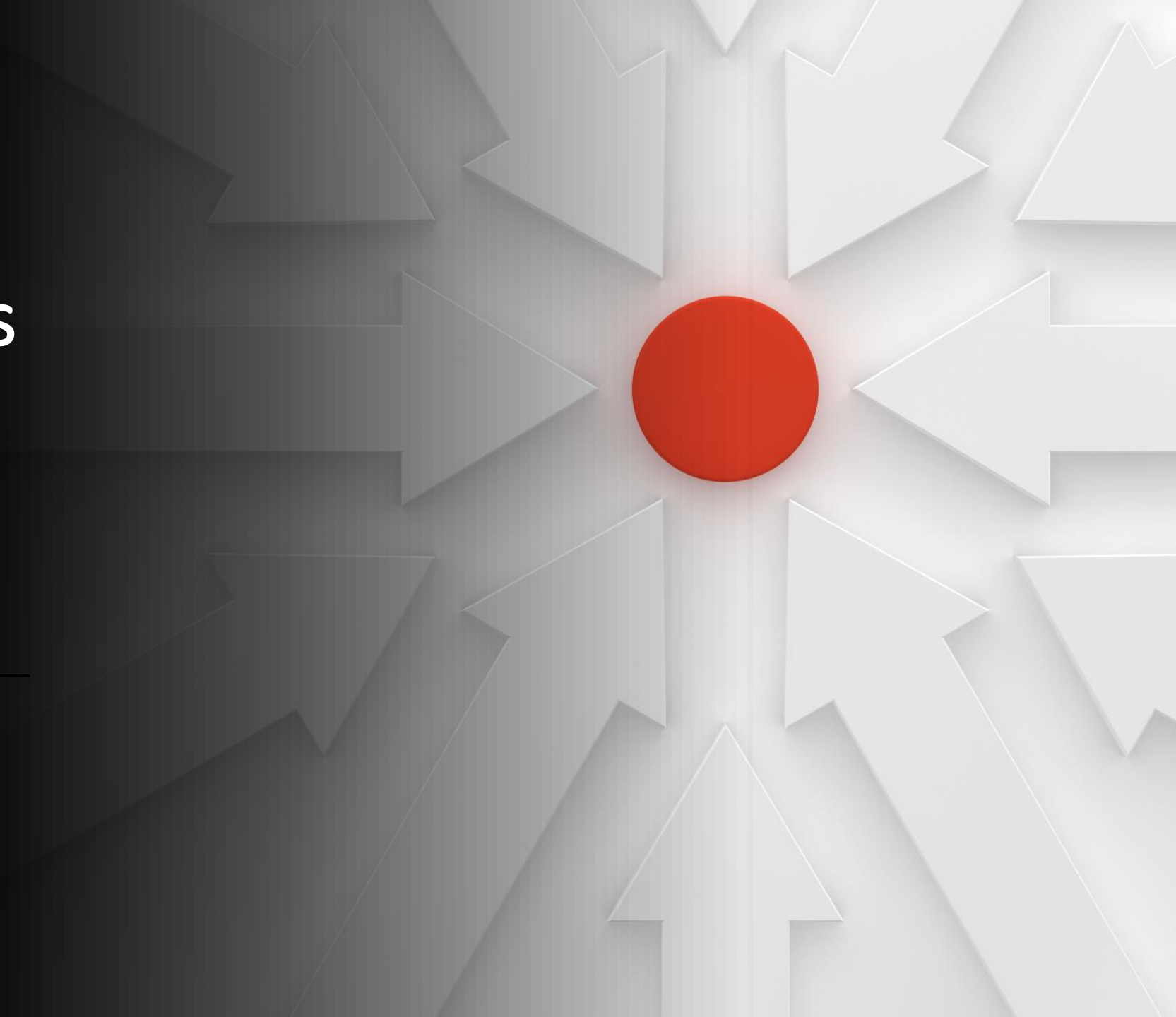
The background is a dark, textured surface, likely asphalt, with several white arrows pointing to the right. The arrows are slightly faded and scattered across the frame. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

EXAMPLE:

Module 1



# Future Directions



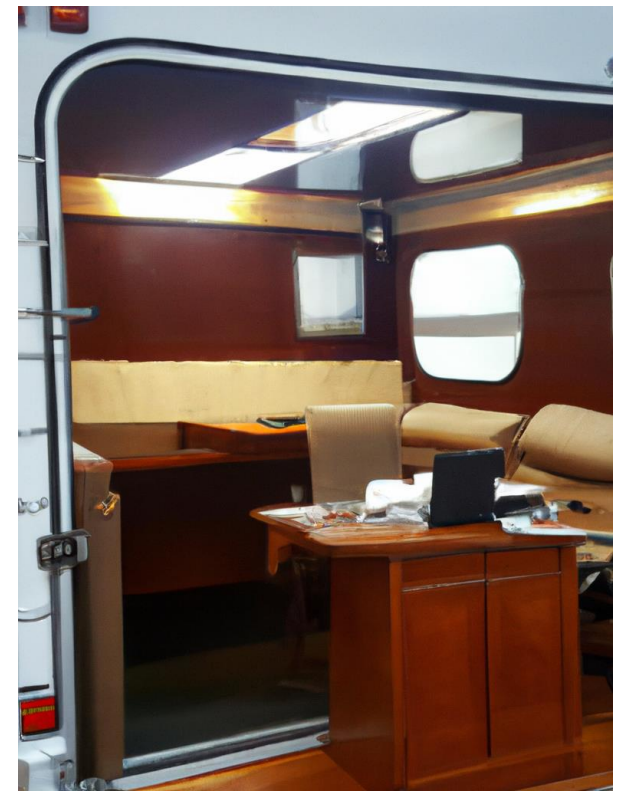
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# Your Feedback and Questions





How Can You  
Help?



Innovative Experiments – Using our Imaginations



# Getting in Touch

Judge Michelle Rick – [MRick@courts.mi.gov](mailto:MRick@courts.mi.gov)

Margaret Pettipas – [pettipasmc@gmail.com](mailto:pettipasmc@gmail.com)

Dennis Kennedy – [dmk@denniskennedy.com](mailto:dmk@denniskennedy.com)

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