



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Colorado Bar Association

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CBA and CJI announce Diversity on the Bench Initiative

Denver, Colo. (May 26, 2020) – The Colorado Bar Association (CBA) and the Colorado Judicial Institute (CJI) announce their collaborative initiative, CBA/CJI Diversity on the Bench Coalition. The CBA/CJI Coalition will lead a community-wide effort to comprehensively address a lack of diversity among Colorado state court judges. The mission is for Colorado’s state court bench to reflect the diversity of Colorado’s population.

Developed out of a long-standing need, leaders Judge Gary Jackson, and Patricia M. Jarzobski, former CBA president and Colorado Women’s Bar Association president, have drawn on their leadership experience to gather a robust team of legal leaders to address this issue creatively. The Coordinating Committee of the Coalition are:

Patricia Jarzobski	Coalition Co-Chair, The Law Office of Patricia Jarzobski Past President Colorado Bar Association, Past President Colorado Women’s Bar Association
Hon. Gary M. Jackson	Coalition Co-Chair, Judge, Denver County Court, Co-Founder Sam Cary Bar Association
Hon. Kathleen Croshal	Colorado Bar Association President, retired Pueblo County Court Judge
Peter Koclanes	Colorado Judicial Institute Board Chair, Sherman & Howard Partner
Joshua Anderson	Colorado Judicial Institute Executive Director
John Baker	Former Director of the National Institute of Trial Advocacy and Former Director of the Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program
Jessica Brown	Colorado Bar Association President-Elect, Past President Colorado Women’s Bar Association, Gibson Dunn partner
Miko Brown	Past President Asian Pacific American Bar Association (Colorado), Davis, Graham & Stubbs partner
James Anaya	Dean, University of Colorado School of Law

Christine Hernandez	Past President Colorado Hispanic Bar Association, Hernandez & Associates
Liz Krupa	Past President Colorado Hispanic Bar Association, Law Offices Of Elizabeth Espinosa Krupa
Amy Larson	Colorado & Denver Bar Associations CEO and Executive Director
Ryan Peyton	Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program Director, Center For Legal Inclusiveness Board Chair
David Powell	Deputy Attorney General for State Services
John Rodman	ABOTA National Board Representative, Rodman & Rodman LLC
Hon. Jonathan Shamis	Judge, 5 th Judicial District, Lake County Court
Hon. Karen Steinhauser	Judge, Aurora Municipal Court, Law Office of Karen Steinhauser LLC, Professor Sturm College of Law
Phyllis V. Wan	Chief Diversity & Inclusion Office, Holland & Hart

According to the Center for Legal Inclusiveness, it wasn't until 1957 that Colorado had its first non-white judge. James Flanigan, a grandson of slaves, was appointed to the municipal court, and nine years later, he was elevated as Colorado's first African-American district court judge. Fifty-four years after this appointment, Colorado currently has 196 District Court Judges (4 are currently African Americans), and the vast majority (174) remain white. Of all three branches of government, the people have the most direct contact with the judicial branch. Thus this Coalition is determined to efficiently address this issue with priority geographic areas for initial work in Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, El Paso, and Pueblo Counties. "Diversity on the bench matters because it promotes confidence in the judicial system, the rule of law, and the notion of equal justice for all," shared Gary Jackson.

Diversity is not limited but begins with traditionally underrepresented communities within gender, race/ethnicity/national origin, and LGBTQ identity. As explained by Patricia Jarzobski, "Building bridges and breaking down barriers so that all diverse attorneys envision opportunities to serve in the judiciary is vitally important to model a culture where everyone can thrive, be valued, and be heard."

Recent demographic studies completed by the human resources division of the Colorado State Court Administrator's Office in early 2020 show that only 40% of all judges and justices are female in Colorado, and 11% are ethnically diverse (non-white) (note: both statistics exclude Denver County). District and County judicial officer roles don't further reflect more diversity than the statewide totals, as 174 (out of 196 total) and 101 (out of 113 total) are currently white judicial officers in these courts, respectively. At the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court levels, we currently have no African Americans serving, yet out of 22 Court of Appeals Judges, there currently are three Hispanic judicial officers and one Asian American. The Supreme Court's 7 Justices number 2 Hispanic and 5 white judicial officers.

The Coalition's current work focuses on designing an action plan around five priority areas:

- Candidate Development (to provide notice, increase the pipeline, and develop new candidates for available judicial openings throughout the state's courts).
- Nominating Commission Facilitation (to understand the makeup of our commissions, encourage volunteer applications and additional training options for the commissioners, and track their selection and progress).
- Deciding Officials (to educate various decision-makers on the importance of having a diverse bench).
- Accountability and Tracking (to collect accurate data on the demographics of current judicial officers and pools of applicants to clarify the problems and to bust myths surrounding the issues facing the diversity of our bench in Colorado).
- Messaging and Promoting (to communicate and share data)

Please direct all inquiries about the Diversity on the Bench Initiative to the Colorado Bar Association.

About the Colorado Judicial Institute

The Colorado Judicial Institute (CJI) is a non-profit, founded in 1979, whose mission it is to preserve and enhance the fairness, impartiality, and excellence of Colorado's Courts, to further public understanding of the Colorado judicial system, and to ensure that the courts meet the needs of the people. The Colorado Judicial Institute (www.coloradojudicialinstitute.org)

About the Colorado Bar Association

Founded in 1897, the Colorado Bar Association (CBA) advances members' practices, supports the justice system, and enriches our communities. The CBA values its diverse community, is committed to the advancement of equity in the practice of law, and strives to remove barriers for success within the CBA and the greater Colorado legal community for underrepresented groups. The Colorado Bar Association (www.cobar.org)

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