REPORT AUTHORED BY:
Hon. Janice M. Rosa (Ret.) and Martha-Elin Blomquist, Ph.D.

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The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges® (NCJFCJ) provides cutting-edge training, wide-ranging technical assistance, and research to help the nation’s courts, judges, and staff in their important work. Since its founding in 1937 by a group of judges dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the nation’s juvenile courts, the NCJFCJ has pursued a mission to improve courts and systems practice and raise awareness of the core issues that touch the lives of many of our nation’s children and families.

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OVERVIEW

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), held the **Second National Summit on Courts and Military-Connected Families** (Summit) September 23-24, 2019, at the Saber and Quill Conference Center, Fort Knox, KY. The one-and-a-half-day Summit brought together members and staff of the military-related committees of the NCJFCJ, subject matter experts, representatives of national-level organizations that serve military-connected families, stakeholders with local and state government and nonprofit organizations, and members of the civilian and military communities of two demonstration sites selected for this State Justice Institute (SJI) funded project. The Summit’s purpose was to further the national discussion by those who engage with justice-involved service members, National Guard, Reserve, and veteran populations on how best to assist them when they interface with juvenile and family courts. The 2019 Summit sought to be a focused and targeted “deep dive” into the realities of the information and practices needed to promote effective court-military systems communication and collaboration.

This Summit built upon the work of the first National Summit, held in 2015 at Fort Benning, GA. The initial Summit was organized to offer a national forum for state and local civilian court systems and military personnel from across the country to discuss the experiences and needs of military-connected families who come in contact with family and juvenile courts. Following the 2015 Summit, and with funding from SJI, the NCJFCJ undertook a demonstration project\(^1\) to explore strategies for collaboration and communication at the community level between court systems and military installations. Members of the NCJFCJ Military Task Force selected Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base (San Diego and Orange Counties, CA) and Fort Knox Army Base (Hardin County, KY) as the demonstration sites. Experiences meeting with stakeholders from these demonstration sites helped to inform the program for the 2019 Second National Summit. Demonstration site stakeholders were also among the presenters at the Second National Summit.

Nearly 60 participants attended the Second National Summit. Roughly one-quarter of Summit attendees were from the military and three-quarters were from civilian court systems and allied professionals, including nonprofit organizations, state government personnel, and national organizations.

\(^1\) In addition to hosting a Summit and working with the demonstration sites to learn about practices and needs, the other project-related activities that NCJFCJ has undertaken include creating a Task Force to guide the project, creating and maintaining an online National Resource Center on Military-Connected Families and the Courts on the NCJFCJ website, developing a Resource Guide, and creating curriculum for training judges on military culture.
MILITARY-CONNECTED FAMILIES AND THE COURTS PROJECT

For nearly a decade, the NCJFCJ has been the leading educator of judges on the needs of service members. The NCJFCJ has also been a staunch advocate of the urgency of better coordination of the resources and supports between the state courts and the Armed Forces. The NCJFCJ undertook the Military-Connected Families and the Courts Project to focus on the specific issues that military-connected families face when they have legal matters before the civilian family or juvenile court systems.

The project goal is to determine how to improve service coordination and outcomes for this population of families. These families have a distinct set of needs, stressors, experiences, and constraints due to a family member’s status as active duty or reservist with the military. Through its long-standing mission to provide judges with needed training for handling cases of military-connected families, the NCJFCJ has increased its awareness of the circumstances and contexts that affect military-connected families. This awareness led the NCJFCJ to make better coordination and communication between state court and military systems an imperative.

THE ISSUES IN CONTEXT

Families with military connections are under the supervision and control of military command. When they are also justice-system involved, they come under the control of a civilian state court system as well. Both systems have always operated in exclusive circles with little experience, expectation, or support to coordinate or cooperate with one another. It is when military-connected families intersect with juvenile and family court judges that the lack of knowledge and coordination between these large systems becomes pressing and problematic.

Service members can find themselves involved with cases of juvenile delinquency, child welfare, family violence, divorce or custody, or spousal and child support. Besides the jurisdictional issues raised in military-connected family cases (e.g., which state has jurisdiction in a custody matter when a parent moves to another state due to a change in military assignment), these families are unique in other ways. They often are living away from their families of origin. This means that the most immediate support system, to the extent there is one, is the support system of the military installation and the family support

“All of the faculty were engaging and attentive. I loved how each presentation was tailored to a specific area.” - Anonymous
services available there. Through their installation, families have access to the support and resources of the military Family Assistance Program (FAP). But often there is little knowledge of, or coordination between FAP staff, processes, and services and outside civilian and court-required processes and services. Military-connected families are also subject to change of post without control over timing or location and thus have little choice over where they live or for how long.2

PROMOTING CROSS-SYSTEM COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

To improve outcomes for justice-involved service members and their family members, education of both judges and civilian stakeholders about the unique circumstances and culture of this population is critical. It is equally essential that military command and military support services know of and understand the resources, restrictions, and needs of the state courts to whose courtrooms their service members appear. This Summit and the demonstration project were developed to go beyond system education to cross-system connections and collaboration.

The Project selected the two demonstration sites of Camp Pendleton in California and Fort Knox in Kentucky for conducting in-depth site visits with military and civilian stakeholders. At these visits, Project staff worked with stakeholders to identify each locale’s strengths and challenges in exchanging information and coordinating services among the civilian court, military command, and family services on and off installation. Sharing some of the learnings and opportunities from the site visits with members of the NCJFCJ military committees and leadership was an important feature of the 2019 Summit.

SECOND NATIONAL SUMMIT PROGRAM

The agenda for the Second National Summit is set forth in Appendix A and the participant, faculty, and staff lists are provided in Appendix B. The program opened with a welcome from the Fort Knox Base Command. As hosts, members of the Fort Knox military community - officers as well as staff members of the Family Advocacy Program - had a visible and active presence throughout the Summit. They helped to connect Summit attendees to the realities of an assignment to a military installation and the world in which officers, enlisted members and families, and civilian service professional live. Attendees were very appreciative of the

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2 However, they often have housing and employment resources that their civilian counterparts do not have.
hospitality and interest that members of the Fort Knox community extended.

On the Summit’s first day, participants focused on the multiple intersections across civilian courts, military service members, and command. Attendees offered both macro (national, federal) as well as micro (individual installations, individual service members) viewpoints. This combination of perspectives and experiences enriched the discussions.

Military-connected families in civil, juvenile, and family court cases face issues involving domestic violence, divorce and custody, juvenile delinquency, and interstate placement options in child welfare cases. The Summit program purposefully focused on these main areas. Panel presentations and subject matter experts helped walk Summit attendees through key challenges and struggles that either military litigants or the courts themselves face. Many challenges are due to the absence of court-military command coordination, the absence of uniformity on the national level (for both military and court institutions), and the absence of regulations or guidelines that address what justice-involved military-connected families need. The issues that National Guard and Reserve members and their families experience - distinct from those of active service members - were also highlighted.

Speakers and attendees shared tools, strategies, and reports that they had developed or were aware of to promote cross-system collaboration and communication at the local level. These items will be added to the resources that NCJFCJ staff are gathering for the newly created National Resource Center on Military-Connected Families in the Juvenile and Family Court System (Resource Center): https://www.ncjfcj.org/Military-Connected-Families (also funded by the SJI as part of the demonstration project).

**AGREEMENT ON PRIORITIES**

As the first day neared its end, a consensus began to form that there were large gaps in knowledge, authority, jurisdiction, resources, and tools that frustrated attendees in effectively addressing the real needs of justice-involved service members. That work would be the focus of the second day.

Indeed, the program on the second day began with recognizing the value of and need for collecting and using data and designing templates to capture information. Successful local strategies for court-military collaboration and communication of services through such
documents as Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement (MOU/ MOA) were also given. Those with experience using MOUs noted that this tool is useful, but it has a limited scope or length, and needs to be regularly reviewed, altered, and modified to reflect changing landscapes.

SUMMIT’S FORWARD ACTION PLANS

The Summit program concluded with two exercises to engage attendees in providing guidance to SJI and NCJFCJ project staff for future work. One concerned the suggestion from national partners and NCJFCJ committee members regarding collaboration with stakeholders, policymakers, and other relevant entities at the state and or national level that were not present at the Summit. The national partners noted others who should be part of the NCJFCJ’s work on courts and military-connected families going forward. Attendees from the demonstration sites also used the “stakeholder collaboration” exercise to make their own plans for collaboration.

A second exercise involved all attendees in a idea-generating activity to generate ‘bold ideas’ for action steps to help remove the challenges and roadblocks that had been identified during the Summit. The ideas and some of the specific steps involved to carry them out are listed below.

TOPIC: **COLLABORATION**

1. Form a national council composed of Department of Defense (DoD) military (all branches), military family support services, Veterans Administration (VA), and the courts (the NCJFCJ and the Conference of Chief Judges (CCJ)), with the mission to coordinate and collaborate on policy, advocate for policy acceptance, and assist with implementation. This would include directing pilot site programs, evaluating improved practices, and taking necessary steps to implement preferred processes and uniform procedures.

TOPIC: **CHILD WELFARE-INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN (ICPC) FOR MILITARY-CONNECTED FAMILIES**

1. Consider the use of the existing Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) contract for MFLCs (Military Family Life Counselors, who are licensed social workers), to expand
their role to include conducting home studies for placement of military-connected children involved in child welfare cases.

2. Expand the guardianship program employed by Fort Belvoir Legal Assistance to other installations and services and pilot this program at three installations in different states.

**TOPIC: COLLECTING DATA FOR KNOWING THE NEEDS OF MILITARY-CONNECTED FAMILIES**

1. Employ automatic Social Security Number (SSN) matching of all parties in court to confirm veteran status for VA benefits. Consider engaging with Veterans Research Search Service (VRSS), a VA organization, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

2. Create uniform regulations or federal legislation to ensure the data needed to assist families are collected. For instance, there are no data for foster care- or juvenile justice-involved children of service members.

3. Assess the ongoing voluntary court program for veterans with domestic violence civil cases in Orange County, California by collecting relevant data regarding demographics, services needed, services provided, and outcomes (for both parties) to determine the efficacy of this approach. If proven to be safe, effective, and restorative, this program could be replicated in other jurisdictions, particularly with federal funding.

**TOPIC: DIVORCE AND CUSTODY/MILITARY-CONNECTED FAMILIES**

1. The Kid’s Turn (San Diego, CA) model could be used across the country to replicate family workshops for separated and divorced families, as well as for pre-deployment peak performance military family groups to support effective co-parenting and communication strategies.

2. Ensure that all states enact the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act (UDPCVA) to provide consistency with deployment custody arrangements.

3. Consider standardized language in parenting orders that re-establish/activate original parenting arrangements upon return from deployment.

4. Provide all military-connected parents and partners considering separation/divorce with counseling to consider all alternative dispute resolution options, including mediation. With the serious pressures on service members and their partners that civilian couples do not experience, DoD should provide uniform preventative measures
that are sustained and meaningful.

**TOPIC: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/MILITARY-CONNECTED FAMILIES**

1. Create court and installation MOUs to provide domestic violence intervention programs from the county surrounding a military installation, as a part of DoD instruction and training.

2. Consider ways to provide needed safety and protection for adult victims and children while still allowing service members to remain active in the service. This would need more input from FAP, domestic violence experts, and command. Consider several pilot sites to explore challenges and possible safe remedies. Identify any active military status of a party in the protection order (active duty cases).

3. Provide formal education to service members, partners, and age-appropriate children about increased domestic violence risks that come with pre- and post-deployment stressors; also provide education about effective measures to mitigate those risks. Rather than expect self-reporting of stresses and needs (which is often viewed as stigmatizing for military-connected families), have a screening process for every service member returning from deployment. Put protective measures in place.

4. Consider changing the culture of allowing command of a military installation to intervene in domestic violence and assault cases. Instead, as a preferred practice, refer these to the civilian court for accountability and services, which may be coordinated with installation services.

5. In each county hosting a military installation, have the command provide a military liaison to the court for all matters and particularly for domestic violence cases. FAP staff and command would coordinate with courts for treatment, resources, and accountability, similar to the veteran’s outreach office. For increased military presence in the courthouses, consider increasing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA).

**TOPIC: JUVENILE JUSTICE/MILITARY-CONNECTED FAMILIES**

1. Front load juvenile services, including diversion management, and coordinate services with installation resources. Consider pilot sites and MOUs, with emphasis on coordinating civilian and military resources. Focus on strength building and resilience.

2. Enact federal regulation/legislation that directs all military-connected juvenile cases be prosecuted and disposed of only in the corresponding juvenile court in which the installation is located.
3. Consider pilot sites in several states, particularly those sites where there is already strong collaboration on juvenile justice matters, where all prosecution would be directed by the civilian court, and coordinate local services and juvenile diversion options with installation services such as FAP.

4. Provide resources to the National Center of Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), the independent research arm of the NCJFCJ, and Measuring Communities\(^3\) to determine the scope of the problem of juvenile offending on military installations, especially in areas in the country where intervention would have the greatest impact.

5. Create military-supported, school-based clinics in public schools (junior and senior high schools) with high military-connected populations; consider various approaches in use around the country; use of pilot sites would allow evaluation of these programs.

6. Ensure that every military installation has in place an MOU with the surrounding jurisdiction(s) for collaboration with state child-serving agencies and juvenile courts regarding sharing of information and use of resources for diversion, treatment, and accountability.

**TOPIC: SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

1. Coordinate with DoD to implement a uniform policy for all branches of service for non-violent first-time offenders to allow self-reporting of substance abuse issues and access to support and services, without negative impact, upon successful treatment.

**TOPIC: TECHNOLOGY**

1. Invite liaisons from other fields to join as stakeholders in harnessing current and developing new technology (e.g., machine learning, artificial intelligence, data analytics, online/e-learning, etc.) to better connect Armed Forces with local, state, and national jurisdictions. The aim is to create pathways of communication and exchange between military and courts where none now exist.

**TOPIC: TRAINING**

1. Provide e-learning options for courts on such topics as: domestic violence in the military environment; mental health and trauma; military resources for justice-involved or at-risk military-connected families; and military culture and unique pressures on military-connected families.

\(^3\) Military Family Research Institute of Purdue University found at [https://measuringcommunities.org/home](https://measuringcommunities.org/home)
“The Summit on Military-Connected Families and the Courts was an eye-opening experience for me. I went into the conference knowing it would be a complicated system but really had very little idea of how much I was underestimating the reality of the situation. It is so heartening to know that all the different entities involved are willing to come together with open minds and hearts to improve services to the families that dedicate their lives to protect our country and keep us safe.”

- Tricia Gardner, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth

SUMMIT EVALUATION AND LESSONS

Following the Summit, attendees were invited to complete an on-line survey to evaluate the Summit and their experience. Of those responding, the largest cohort (representing about one-fifth of the respondents) was judicial officers. Other categories of respondents were NCJFCJ committee members and staff, national partner representatives, military personnel, and representatives of nonprofit organizations.

With respect to sessions that participants identified as beneficial, those on the topics of divorce and custody, domestic violence, and civilian and military resources were rated the most beneficial. Almost one-half of the respondents said all the sessions increased their knowledge and awareness equally. Two-thirds said that they could use the information from the Summit in their daily work. More than three-quarters of the respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the content of the Summit, the presenters at the Summit, and their overall experience at the Summit.

Features of the Summit that respondents noted they would have liked included or which were recommended for future summits were noted:

- more local judges
- specific stories from voices of military, vet spouses, and family members on challenging experiences with the court system
- more military perspective
- expanded sessions on legislative priorities
Members of the Summit Planning Work Group (comprised of NCJFCJ project staff, Military Task Force Committee Members, Christian Co., KY judge, Hardin Co., KY judge and district attorney, KY Court Administration Director, and KY Supreme Court staff) held a teleconference two weeks after the Summit program to review the Evaluation Survey results and to debrief the Summit.

Key points highlighted in the Work Group's debrief were:

- the high level of engagement of attendees during the entire one-and-a-half-day program;
- the physical presence of a Board member of the State Justice Institute and Chief Justice of his state courts, who attended the entire program;
- from the “Stakeholder Collaboration” exercise, the helpful suggestions and contact information for stakeholder outreach for future work with the courts and military-connected families;
- from the “Bold Ideas” exercise, specific actions and first steps to consider in future plans and grant proposals to move SJI’s and NCJFCJ’s efforts and impact forward;
- the need to work more closely with base command and civilian management-level personnel for buy-in for demonstration site activities and national meetings; closer communication and buy-in are needed to promote understanding of the importance of the work for cross-system collaboration and communication and of the relevance of national trainings and meetings to installation staff and the families they serve;
- in the military community/chain of command context, significant advance notice (such as six months) is required in order for staff/military personnel to receive approval to attend nonmilitary sponsored meetings and functions that require travel; it was suggested that NCJFCJ work with other national partners that are successful at engaging and involving military staff in their meetings and trainings for help with strategies for engagement;
- the need to work more closely with the DoD in order to make a meaningful uniform difference at the national scale and across branches, installations, and states;
- the need for sensitivity to the constraints that rank and file and mid-level military personnel might feel and the reluctance to candidly discuss “issues” that might reflect poorly on their installation or branch of service; and
- strategies to ensure that the voices of military family members are heard at NCJFCJ’s
future national gatherings; while efforts were made to have family member voice and participation at the Second Summit, the hoped-for involvement did not occur.

SUMMARY

The Second National Summit on Courts and Military-Connected Families was a clear success, in great part due to the honest discussions of the challenges, strengths, and needs in helping justice-involved service families. Alliances were created or strengthened, and participants felt a tangible commitment to forging new paths for better service delivery and coordination. It is also clear that there is much work still to undertake, either at local sites or on the national level.
APPENDIX A
2019 Second National Summit on the Courts and Military-Connected Families Agenda

The Second National Summit on Courts and Military-Connected Families
Fort Knox Army Base
Saber & Quill
Heritage Room
September 23-24, 2019

AGENDA

Meeting Goals

• Convene leaders from both state/civilian courts and military installations
• Gather additional content and resources for the National Resource Center on Military Families in the Juvenile and Family Court System (Resource Center)
• Review completed work of the initiative (development of training curriculum and educational materials, creation of Resource Guide/Bench card, pilots of military-civilian court collaboration in two demonstration sites, and creation of a Resource Center) and receive feedback
• Determine next steps to advance best practices for courts working with military families
  o What should the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) convey to the field about the needs of military-connected families and court-military collaboration?

Monday, September 23, 2019
7:30 – 8:00 a.m. Registration (coffee provided)
8:00 – 8:45 a.m. Opening Comments and Introductions
Colonel Cletis J. King, Fort Knox Garrison Commander; The Honorable John Minton, Chief Justice, Kentucky Supreme Court; Ms. Joey Orduna Hastings, Chief Executive Officer, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

Military and the Courts – Where We Have Been
The Honorable Warner Kennon, Sr., Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Courts of the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit, GA

8:45 – 9:00 a.m.  **Second National Summit Participant Overview**  
Cheri Ely, MA, LSW, Program Director, Juvenile Justice, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

9:00 – 9:30 a.m.  **Military-Connected Families and the Courts Project Panel**  
- *Uniform Standards for Information and Resource Sharing* – Major Evan Seamone  
- *Training Curriculum* – The Honorable Janice Rosa (ret.)  
- *National Resource Center* – Cheri Ely  
- *Demonstration Sites* – Dr. Martha-Elin Blomquist, Senior Site Manager, Juvenile Law, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

9:45 – 10:00 a.m.  **Break**

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.  **Domestic Violence: Issues, Perspectives, and Programs for Military-Connected Families**  
The Honorable Carol Henson, Veterans/Service Members Family Law Domestic Violence Court, Orange Co. CA; Wanda McWhirter, Supervising Court Mediator, Family Court Service, Orange Co. CA; Brian Clubb, Project Director, Military and Veterans Advocacy, Battered Women’s Justice Project

11:00-12:15 p.m.  **Divorce and Custody Issues for Active Service Members and their Families**  
Colonel Mark Sullivan (ret.); Traci J. Voelke, Legal Assistance Attorney, Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, Fort Belvoir, VA

12:15 – 1:15 p.m.  **Lunch**  
The Honorable Jason Fleming, Speaker Introduction  
Dr. James Mason, Our Family Wizard
1:15 – 2:20 p.m. **Civilian and Military Resources to Address Juvenile Delinquency Issues**
Major Evan Seamone; Mark Shouse, Assistant Attorney Hardin Co., KY; Lisa M. Stewart, LCSW, Manager, Family Advocacy Program, Army Community Service, Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, Fort Knox, KY; Tricia Gardner, National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Moderator: Cheri Ely

2:20 – 2:40 p.m. **Break**

2:40 – 3:30 p.m. **Placement Options and Timeliness: A Need for Change in the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) and other Strategies to Better Serve Military-Connected Families**
The Honorable Jason Fleming; Melinda Roberts, Division Chief, Army Community Service, Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, Fort Knox KY; Lisa Shaeffer, Deputy Compact Administrator (Foster, Parent, Relative), KY ICPC
Moderator: The Honorable Janice Rosa (ret.)

3:30 – 4:20 p.m. **Members of the Reserves and the National Guard and their Families – Like Active Duty but Not**
Colonel Scott Thomas, Director, Military and Family Support, Kentucky Army National Guard

4:20 – 4:50 p.m. **Reflections on the Issues**
The Honorable John Romero, Jr., Chair, Military Committee, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and Judge, Children’s Court, Division of the Second Judicial District Court of New Mexico

4:50 – 5:00 p.m. **Prepare for Day Two and Closing**
Cheri Ely

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. **Reception**
Tuesday, September 24, 2019
8:30 – 8:45 a.m.  **Welcome and Additional Reflections on the First Day** (coffee provided)
The Honorable John Romero, Jr.

8:45 – 9:15 a.m.  **Court Strategies for Knowing the Needs of Military-Connected Families: Collecting and Using Data**
Kathy Broniarczyk, Senior Director for Outreach and Operations, Military Family Research Institute, Purdue University

9:15 – 10:00 a.m.  **Strategies for Court-Military Collaboration, Communication, and Coordination of Services**
The Honorable Jason Fleming and Sara Boswell Janes, Christian Co. KY/Fort Campbell

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.  **Break**

10:15 – 10:45 a.m.  **Identifying Stakeholders and Strategies for Collaboration**
Small Group Discussion
Facilitator: Stephine Bowman, Program Attorney, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

10:45 – 11:15 a.m.  **Needs and Actions: Bold ideas**
Facilitator: Dr. Martha-Elin Blomquist

11:15 – 11:45 a.m.  **Report Out**
Facilitator: Dr. Martha-Elin Blomquist

11:45 – 12:00 p.m.  **Wrap Up**
The Honorable John Romero, Jr. and Cheri Ely

*Funding for this meeting has been provided by the generosity of the State Justice Institute. We appreciate the support of Our Family Wizard in sponsoring lunch and the Kentucky Court of Justice and federally-funded Court Improvement Program as a Summit Sponsor for breaks and the reception.*
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Hon. Carol Henson  
Judge, Superior Court of Orange County Lamoreaux Justice Center California

Hon. Warner Kennon Sr.  
Presiding Judge, Georgia Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

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Professional Liaison, Our Family Wizard

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Hon. John Minton Jr.  
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Kentucky

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Hon. John Romero Jr.  
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Hon. Janice Rosa (Ret.)  
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