

# BENCHMARK

AJA

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## AJA Holds Annual Conference in Reno

The American Judges Association held its 2001 annual conference at the beautiful Silver Legacy Resort in Reno, Nevada, October 1-5. The conference provided opportunities to conduct the business of the association, participate in an excellent continuing judicial education program, touch base with vendors that provide services to courts, socialize with fellow judges, and do much more.

Host judges Jay Dilworth and James Van Winkle of the Reno Municipal Court worked diligently to prepare for this event, which followed closely on the heels of the tragedies of September 11. The opening ceremony provided by the Reno Police Color Guard, featuring the flags of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, included welcoming addresses from AJA president Chris Williams, Chief Justice Bill Maupin of Nevada, and Judge David Orr from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, who represented the Canadian judges. The ceremony was moving and inspirational.

### Highlights of the Educational Program

Judge Proctor Hug, Jr., of the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals delivered the Tom C. Clark lecture. He talked about the vital role of an independent judiciary in a functioning democracy. Hug urged careful judicial attention to constitutional and civil liberties issues and saluted several judges, state and federal, who had upheld the rights of blacks in the South in the past century. "These judges refused to duck their responsibility. They upheld the law and enforced the Constitution. The best description I know of them is expressed in the words of Maxwell Anderson's play, *Valley Forge*: 'There are some men who lift the level of the age in which they live, so that all men stand on higher ground.'"

Professor Charles H. Whitebread II offered his usual penetrating insight into the latest decisions of the United States



Judge Proctor Hug

Supreme Court, including the most publicized decision of the year: *Bush vs. Gore*. "The almost unanimous view of scholars across the board, right and left, is that *Bush v. Gore* was a mistake by the United States Supreme Court," Whitebread said. "I fear that that's the position of almost every legal scholar in the country."

Judge Brent Adams provided an address on the exercise of judicial discretion, which he described as "the power to act wisely." He concluded with a very practical seven-step guide for judges to follow in using their judicial discretion.

### New Officers for 2001-02

Judge Chris Williams, who put Malvern, Arkansas, on the map as president of AJA, relinquished his position to Judge Bonnie Sudderth, who hails from Fort Worth, Texas. Our new president will be joined this year by Judge Francis X. Halligan, Jr. (New Jersey), as president-elect; Judge Michael R. McAdam (Missouri) as first vice-president; Judge Gayle Nachtigal (Oregon) as second vice-president; Judge Harold Froehlich (Wisconsin) as treasurer; and Judge Michael Cicconetti (Ohio) as secretary. These officers have demonstrated their commitment to AJA by their leadership and

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