

# AJA BENCHMARK

A Publication of the American Judges Association • Vol. 26, No. 4 • Winter 2003

## AJA and CTC8

AJA President Michael R. McAdam

**T**he Eighth Court Technology Conference (CTC8) was held in Kansas City, Missouri, October 28–30, 2003. CTC8 is produced every other year by the National Center for State Courts. The American Judges Association was a participating sponsor of the conference. By all accounts CTC8 was a very successful conference, with over 2,000 court administrators, clerks, and other judicial professionals from all over the world in attendance, including 250 judges.

AJA was very active at CTC8. At the first general session, I welcomed the delegates to Kansas City and spoke about the AJA, its mission, and our upcoming conferences in Savannah and San Francisco. (My speech is available for viewing on the Web at [www.ctc8.net](http://www.ctc8.net). Just click on the streaming video for Chief Justice Toal's keynote address.)

On the second day, AJA cohosted a champagne reception, along with the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association (KCMBA) at its downtown headquarters for all judges attending CTC8. This wonderful evening event was generously provided by MAXIMUS, one of CTC8's primary exhibitors. A shuttle to and from the reception



Michael R. McAdam

was sponsored by another CTC8 exhibitor, ACS. About 100 judges attended the reception, which featured a minimum of speeches and a maximum of fun. Thanks are due to KCMBA president Sylvester James and KCMBA executive director Rae Jean McCall for allowing AJA to use their beautiful facility.

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## Latest Information on Judicial Best Practices Posted Online

**J**udges looking for successful procedures and policies from other courts to help improve the operations of their own courts can consult the Best Practices Institute online at the National Center for State Courts' Web site at [www.ncsconline.org](http://www.ncsconline.org). The institute, which emerged from the National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System in 1999, is dedicated to identifying and promoting best practices in courts around the country as part of a broad strategy to improve court performance and service to the public.

The institute's Web site currently contains information in 15 topic areas. Here are the latest additions to the Best Practices Institute's online collection:

- Three new reference lists: Combating Bias in the Courts, Court Recording, and Family Violence

- Three new practice summaries by NCSC staff, which provide a quick overview of key areas in judicial administration: Judicial Management of Cases Involving Self-Represented Litigants, Domestic Violence Workplace Policies, and Appellate Court Best Practices
- The results of an expert panel on Emergency Management

For information on these and other topics covered by NCSC's Best Practices Institute, set your Web browser to [www.ncsconline.org](http://www.ncsconline.org), click on "Best Practices Institute," then click on "Topics," or use this URL: [www.ncsconline.org/Projects\\_Initiatives/BPI/Topics.htm](http://www.ncsconline.org/Projects_Initiatives/BPI/Topics.htm). 

# Web Site Helps Courts and Self-Represented Litigants

**M**ore and more citizens are choosing to represent themselves in court, and courts often find themselves straining to serve these usually inexperienced litigants. Where can litigants and courts turn for help in pursuing these cases and in guaranteeing an open justice system for all? Both can turn online to [www.selfhelpsupport.org](http://www.selfhelpsupport.org), which is a part of Pro Bono Net.

The mission of [selfhelpsupport.org](http://selfhelpsupport.org) is “to support practitioners in the courts, community, and legal profession through the dissemination of relevant information on self-help and legal aid programs.” The Web site offers an extensive online library of useful resources for courts and support organizations to use in building and improving programs for self-represented litigants.

Topics include:

- Program Development
- Program Administration
- Ethics
- Technology

Courts can also contribute resources to the site.

Participating organizations in [selfhelpsupport.org](http://selfhelpsupport.org) are the American Judicature Society, Legal Services Corporation, National Center for State Courts, Pro Bono Net, State Justice Institute (who provided the funding for the site), and Zorza Associates. Membership in [selfhelpsupport.org](http://selfhelpsupport.org) is free. 

## AJS Opens Nominations for Opperman Award

**T**he American Judicature Society (AJS) is seeking nominations for the first annual *Dwight D. Opperman Award*. This award will be presented to a state judge of a trial or appellate court who has had a career of distinguished judicial service. Any interested person or organization may submit a nomination.

The *Opperman Award* will be given to a qualified judge whose career is characterized by:

- Decisions that, through their wisdom, humanity, and commitment to the rule of law make clear that bench, bar, and community alike would willingly entrust that judge with the most complex cases of the most far-reaching importance.
- Writings, including opinions, lectures, or other publications, that reveal scholarship and dedication to the improvement of the judicial process.

- Activities that have helped to improve the administration of justice, advance the rule of law, reinforce collegial ties within the judicial branch, or strengthen civic ties within local, national, or international communities.

Each nomination should include a statement in support of the nomination not to exceed five pages in length, and all available contact information for the nominator and nominee. Nominations should be post-marked by **February 29, 2004**, and addressed to the American Judicature Society, Attention: Opperman Selection Panel, 2700 University Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50311. 

### AJA and CTC8, *continued*

The following morning, I was again at the main podium of the Kansas City Convention Center’s Music Hall introducing the final day’s keynote speaker, Peter Bensinger, who has been called “the most wired lawyer in America.” Mr. Bensinger, to my chagrin, was able to use a digital picture he took of me on the stage to demonstrate the ease of using available technologies in the courtroom.

I believe that AJA benefited greatly from its involvement with CTC8. Judges and other court professionals from the United States and around the world

now know about our organization. As a result of our exposure at CTC8, several vendors have indicated a strong interest in participating in the AJA’s vendor show in San Francisco next fall. These are good results and the product of the hard work of a corps of four Kansas City lawyers: Lisa Gentleman, Andrea Welch, Rebecca Wood, and Molly Williams (wife of Judge John B. Williams). The success of the reception was entirely due to their voluntary efforts. AJA owes them a big “Thank you” for a job well done. 

# AJA INSIGNIA WEAR

- Embroidered Patches:** \$3.00 each
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large extra large XX large

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## AJA MEMBER PROFILE

### Chief Judge Kevin S. Burke Hennepin County, Minnesota

**F**or nearly two decades, Kevin S. Burke has served Minnesota's largest metropolitan court, beginning as a district court judge in 1984. Since then, Judge Burke has served as chair of the Minnesota Conference of Chief Judges, assistant chief judge of Hennepin County District Court, presiding judge of the Hennepin County District Court Drug Court, and, currently, chief judge of Hennepin County District Court.

As chair of the Minnesota State Board of Public Defense, Judge Burke spearheaded the transformation of the public defense delivery system in Minnesota. As a result, a new unified, statewide, and state-funded public defense system has replaced an underfunded, county-by-county appointed counsel system.

For five years, Judge Burke served as chair of the Conference of Chief Judges, the administrative policymaking body of the Minnesota trial courts. He has worked with the state's chief justice and other key judicial representatives to lead a strategic planning process for the judiciary, to develop and communicate a vision of an effective and innovative court system, and to fashion a legislative agenda and public education program to support the organizational needs and goals of the Minnesota Judicial System.

Judge Burke was an early leader in promoting community outreach by judges to enhance public understanding and support for the Minnesota Judicial System. For several years he has hosted a weekly cable program in the Twin Cities area called "Meet Your Court." As a recognized expert in judicial/media relations, and for his unique accessibility as a judge to the media, the Society for Professional Journalists presented him with their Award of Merit. He has supported the development

of self-help and domestic violence resource centers in the Hennepin County Courthouse, which have served as models for other jurisdictions.

Judge Burke was the driving force in the creation of the Hennepin County Drug Court, the first drug court in Minnesota and the first in the country to focus on all felony-level drug cases. After two years, evaluations showed that the drug court decreased time between arrest and resolution by a factor of five, imprisoned and incarcerated the most serious offenders at a rate higher than the rest of the state, and reduced offenders' use of drugs. His work earned national attention.

A second innovation of national significance is Judge Burke's pioneering efforts to study, measure, and enhance the perception and reality of fairness experienced by litigants in his court. He shared findings from a study of fairness in his court with colleagues, and judges volunteered to be videotaped on the bench and critiqued on their listening and communication abilities to help improve their judicial skills.

Judge Burke has also worked to adapt the tools of the quality management movement to improve court functions. As the first judicial system in the country, Judge Burke is leading his court in participating in the rigorous Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award evaluation process, which emphasizes management through measurable results.

Throughout his career, Judge Burke has assisted other state courts and promoted the improvement of the administration of justice through federal agencies and national organizations. He speaks at judicial conferences and has served for many years on the National Center for State Courts

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## AJA Member Profile, *continued*

(NCSC) Board of Directors. He has participated in numerous NCSC projects and served as a curriculum advisor and faculty for Institute for Court Management programs.

His service to the judicial community has extended to international work as well. He has traveled to Albania to monitor a trial for international human rights violations; to India to assist a national commission studying criminal justice reform; to Mexico to meet with their government officials about the relationship between Mexico and U.S. state and federal courts; to Ireland to consult on reorganization of their judicial system; and to Canada to speak at a national conference of Canadian judges on judicial independence.

Judge Burke has been honored with the Hennepin County Bar Association Judicial Professionalism Award (2003), NCSC's William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence (2003) and Distinguished Service Award (2002), the H.E.A.R.T Lifetime Achievement Award (1998), the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award (1997), and many other awards. 

## NCSC Launches Search for New President

**T**he National Center for State Courts recently launched a search for a new president on the heels of an announcement by current president Roger Warren that he will be leaving NCSC later this year. The Boston search firm Isaacson, Miller is actively seeking names of interested applicants or recommendations of potential candidates. Please visit the NCSC Web site, [www.ncsconline.org](http://www.ncsconline.org) for a job description and more information on the search. 

# BENCHMARK

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