

The National Association of Women Judges is Coming To Atlanta for their 39th Annual Conference

By: Timur Selimovic

The National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) was formed in 1979 by Justice Vaino Spencer of the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division 1 (1980 – 2007) and Justice Joan Dempsey Klein of the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Three (1978 - Present). Justice Spencer and Justice Klein were two female judges with a commitment to increasing the number of women in the judiciary and improving access to justice for minority and underprivileged individuals across all genders.

As the 36th President of NAWJ, the Honorable Diana Becton is the leading voice for women in the judiciary. President Becton's theme for NAWJ's 2017 year is "Honoring Our Past, Pressing Toward the Future for Access, Fairness, and Diversity." The theme for NAWJ's 39th Annual Conference, which will be held in Atlanta from October 11 – 15, 2017, is *Access to Justice: Past, Present, and Future*. Under the leadership of the Atlanta Conference Co-Chairs, Justice Carol W. Hunstein of the Georgia Supreme Court and Judge Sara Doyle of the Georgia Court of Appeals, the 39th Annual NAWJ Conference will encompass NAWJ's broader 2017 theme and NAWJ's commitment to fairness, accessibility, and equality. Confirmed speakers for the 39th Annual NAWJ Conference include, among others, 39th President of the United States of America, Jimmy Carter, and Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, Justice Michael Boggs, Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears (Ret.), Judge Herbert Phipps (Ret.), Judge Frank Hull, Judge Beverly Martin, Judge Julie E. Carnes, Judge Jill A. Pryor, Judge Leigh May, Judge Amy Totenberg, and Former Deputy Attorney General for the United States Department of Justice, Sally Yates. Additional invited guests include Governor Nathan Deal, Justice Britt Grant, Congressman John Lewis, Former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, and Ambassador Susan Coppedge, Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State.

Integral to NAWJ's annual conference is a community service component, intended to leave a lasting impact in every city that NAWJ visits for its conference. In Atlanta, NAWJ members will speak with inmates at a women's jail as part of a tour lead by Judge Gail Tusan, Chief Judge of the Fulton County Superior Court. NAWJ members will also donate books to women's correctional facilities and to boys and girls in juvenile detention, and organize a clothing drive for law school

students and young women in foster care entering the workforce. Additionally, at the recommendation of Judge Susan Edlein from Fulton County State Court, tables at the annual conference will feature unique centerpieces instead of flowers that will be donated to local Atlanta community organizations once the conference is over.

Beyond the annual conference, one of NAWJ's signature programs is called "Color of Justice." The program targets girls and minorities of all ages, encouraging them to consider legal careers by facilitating connections with minority female judges and attorneys. The program informs and educates students on how to pursue and finance a legal education, which is critical because many students may be the first in their families to attend college. As part of the 39th NAWJ Annual Conference, under the leadership of Judge Phinia Aten, Chief Judge of the Rockdale County Magistrate Court, local judges and attorneys will begin chronicling the history of Georgia's women judges.

At its core, NAWJ works to increase access to justice and fairness for all. President Becton is proud of NAWJ's legacy and founding vision, which is a sentiment echoed by NAWJ co-founding member Justice Joan Dempsey Klein. According to Klein, "when so many girls today are considered throwaways all over the world, we can do even more. There is a strong need for leadership for women."

For more information about the conference, please contact Karlise.grier@georgiacourts.gov.