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Colorado Judicial Institute’s 2010 annual meeting stresses excellence and accountability in our courts

DENVER – Colorado is becoming a national model for judicial excellence and accountability in the wake of recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have focused attention on the need to keep state courts free of political pressure, Bob Miller, managing partner of Perkins Coie LLP, outgoing chair of the Colorado Judicial Institute, reported at the group’s annual meeting in Denver on May 13.

CJI is an independent citizens organization dedicated to preserving Colorado’s merit selection, performance evaluation and retention election system. Since its adoption in 1966, the Colorado system has been refined until it is now hailed as the “gold standard” of state judicial selection and accountability systems by national experts, Miller noted.

CJI, now in its 31st year, has worked to protect and improve Colorado’s judicial system by working to keep it both free of partisan politics and accountable to the public. CJI sponsors an annual Judicial Excellence Dinner to recognize outstanding performances by judges. CJI also raises money for advanced training for judges and court personnel.



Incoming CJI Board Chair Sheila Gutterman of Gutterman Griffiths, PC and immediate past chair Robert N. Miller of Perkins Coie LLP.



Newly elected CJI Board Members Dr. Carolyn Jefferson Jenkins of Douglas County Public Schools and Mr. Mark Pedigo of GHP Financial Group.

As the annual report presented at the membership meeting noted, CJI’s involvement with the national Justice at Stake Campaign has made Colorado a key player in a growing national conversation about judicial selection methods. CJI joined in a “friend of the court” brief filed by Justice at Stake in the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* case decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. The brief pointed out the danger that unlimited campaign contributions from corporations and unions could have on judicial elections in the 39 states that still choose at least some of their judges in contested elections.

“While the ruling from the Supreme Court in *Citizens United* will not impact judicial selection methods or retention elections in Colorado, CJI is very concerned about the impact unlimited spending on judicial elections in other parts of the nation will have on public confidence in the courts in general,” the report concluded.

Sheila Gutterman, founding partner of Gutterman Griffiths, P.C., was elected CJI Chair. Saying she was “honored and humbled” to lead the organization, Gutterman pledged to continue CJI’s efforts to ensure fair and impartial courts and improve accountability in our legal system.

Elinor Miller Greenberg, James Scarboro and Peter Willis were re-elected vice chairs for 2010. Anne Garcia was re-elected treasurer and Rod Yokooji was re-elected secretary.

Two new members were elected to CJI’s Board of Directors, Carolyn Jefferson- Jenkins of Douglas County Public Schools and Mark Pedigo of GHP Financial Group.

Twelve current board members were re-elected for another three-year term: Steve Briggs, Russell Carparelli, Mark Fogg, Robert Fullerton, Michael J. Gallagher, Anne Garcia, Elinor Miller Greenberg, David Hersh, Otto K. Hilbert II, Michael J. Hofmann, Michael L. O’Donnell, and Lance Tanaka. Retiring board members, Lawrence Gelfond and Gary Lozow, will become ex-officio directors.

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